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Hidden Identity: A Constructivist Grounded Theory of Black Male Identity Development at Historically Black Colleges and Universities

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HIDDEN IDENTITY: A CONSTRUCTIVIST GROUNDED THEORY OF BLACK MALE

IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AT HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND

UNIVERSITIES

BY

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Hidden Identity: A Constructivist Grounded Theory of Black Male Identity Development at

Historically Black Colleges and Universities

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my late father, Rev. Theodore Rogers Sr. Because of you, I

started this journey. And for you, I completed it. I hope this makes you proud.

Love Always,

Your son.

Abstract

This qualitative study used constructivist grounded theory to create an identity development theory for Black males who attended an historically Black college or university (HBCU). Cross's (1991) Black identity development theory was used as the theoretical framework for this study. Guiding this study were two research questions which were: 1) how do the experiences at a historically Black college and university influence the identity development for Black males; and, 2) what external factors influence the identity development for Black males who attended a historically Black college and university? Eight Black males participated in this study. Criterion sampling was used to qualify participants as participants had to meet the following criterion: (a) self-identify as Black or African American; (b) self-identify as male; (c) completed all their undergraduate coursework and graduated from an HBCU. Data were gathered through two rounds of semi-structured interviews in which participants shared their story of their experiences at HBCUs. From the data, a four-phase identity development theory for Black males who attended HBCUs emerged. The four phases of Black male identity development at an HBCU are: 1) acknowledgment of being a Black male; 2) understanding that not all Black males are the same; 3) creation of an authentic professional identity; and 4) transition into a Black male role model. How this study advances the literature involving Black males and recommendations for future research are provided within the discussion.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Black males have been the subject of higher education research in many different areas including: retention and graduation, mentoring programs, Black males as student athletes, extracurricular participation, and other various areas (e.g., see Blackwell & Pinder, 2014; Brooks, Bush & Bush, 2010; Glenn, 2004; Jones, & Burt, 2013; McCoy, Winkle-Wagner, & Luedke, 2015; Sethna, 2011; Sibulkin & Butler, 2005; Talbert, 2012; Wood, 2012; Young, Johnson, Hawthorne, & Pugh, 2011). Still, one area where the research is limited concerns Black male identity development in higher education, specifically those who attend Historically Black Colleges or Universities (HBCUs). HBCUs are defined as "institutions established before the Civil Rights Act with the sole purpose of educating African Americans" (Patterson, Dunston, & Daniels, 2011, p. 154).

Statement of Problem

When it comes to identity development, there is limited research regarding Black males and their specific identity development (Jackson, 2012), which is why this study is titled Hidden Identity. Higher education has been identified as a place where individuals have the opportunity to find their identity (Fries-Britt, 2000). It is often encouraged for students to figure out who they are and what they want to be while they are in the higher education system (Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, Johnson, & Covarrubias, 2012). For Black males, there are limited models for identity development specifically for students who attend HBCUs (Harper & Nichols, 2008; Jackson, 2012; Johnson & McGowan, 2017; Nedhari, 2009).

A problem for the identity development of Black males is the assumption that all Black males emerging into adulthood come from similar situations (Harper & Nichols, 2008). Examples of these assumptions include growing up in a single parent home; not having a father

figure present; receiving poor educational opportunities; and, being exposed to criminal activities at a young age (Harper & Davis, 2012; Jackson, 2012; The Opportunity Agenda, n.d). This problem has created a one size fits all mentoring approach for Black males in higher education settings through national programs such as Student African American Brotherhood or African American Male Initiative (Gunaratne, Hobson, & Ladak, 2019; Sanchez, Hurd, Neblett, & Vaclavik, 2017). These organizations provide safe spaces for Black males in higher education utilizing faculty or staff sponsors. Similar in their approach, both organizations provide peer to peer mentoring programs for Black males. This one size fits all mentoring approach can be addressed through the exploration of Black male identity and how identity is developed, which in return, provide an opportunity to create innovative and effective mentoring programs (Francis, 2018; Gunaratne, Hobson, & Ladak, 2019).

Another problem for Black male identity development is the portrayal of Black males in the media (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Harper, 2009; Palmer & Maramba, 2011; The Opportunity Agenda, n.d.). In movies, Black males are often portrayed as thugs, gangsters, or athletes with a common plot being one of these avenues is the only way for Black males to change their situation (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; The Opportunity Agenda, n.d.). In order to find financial stability, these movies embellish stereotypes that the only way for Black males to be successful is either to be criminals or athletes. This perception can cause confusion in the identity development of Black males (Nedhari, 2009). Similar to the movies, there has been an increase in the presence of Black males in reality television shows. Shows that are appealing to the Black culture portray successful Black males as rappers or athletes which is the primary avenue for their success (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007). In contrast, HBCUs often provide an

opportunity for Black males to see what success looks like beyond the stereotypes for people who look like them (HBCU Education Central, n.d.).

Purpose of Study

Although assumptions about Black male situations growing up and the portrayal of Black males in the media have an impact on Black male identity development (Givens, Nasir, Ross, & de Royston, 2016), this study looks to address the lack of identity development theories for Black males (Jackson 2012; Johnson & McGowan, 2017). The purpose of this research is to create an theory of identity development for Black males by exploring how higher education institutions with a history of educating predominantly Black students influence this identity development. HBCUs provide an opportunity for students to intersect their career identity with their racial identity, without putting limits on either (HBCU Education Central, n.d.). Exploring identity development for Black males at HBCUs may help to create additional avenues for retention and graduation efforts in regard to Black males at these institutions. While Black male graduation rates have increased through the years, their experiences in the literature are only captured through their academic, social, and environment experiences. While researchers have explored their perseverance in college (Harper, 2009, 2015), it might also help to change the approach in engaging Black males that occurs in higher education by creating an understanding of Black male identity development in HBCU educational settings. This qualitative study explores the process of identity development for Black males and what institutional factors at HBCUs influence their identity development and develops a theory for Black male identity development at HBCUs.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. How do the experiences at a Historically Black College and University influence the identity development for Black males?

2. What external factors[1] influence identity development for Black males who attend a Historically Black College or University?

Significance of this Study

Exploring Black identity development for Black males who attend HBCUs can have an impact on research in higher education by creating an understanding of the process Black males go through to shape their identity (Johnson & McGowan, 2017; McPherson & Shelby, 2004). The current study may help influence intervention programs that are developed specifically for Black males at HBCUs and provide guided efforts for retention and graduation, while helping HBCUs to create a feeling of connectedness for Black male students. In addition to influencing intervention programs, this study helps reduce the research gap for Black male identity development (Jackson III, 2012; Johnson & McGowan, 2017; Harper & Nichols, 2008;).

Theoretical Framework

The conceptual framework to inform this study will be guided by Cross's (1971, 1991) Black identity development theory. Cross (1971) identifies five stages for Black identity development: *pre-encounter, encounter, immersion, internalization* and *internalization commitment.* Cross (1991) further developed his theory with the creation of Nigrescence, which is defined as "the process of becoming Black" (p. 147) and condenses his original theory into four stages noting there is no difference between the fourth and fifth stage of identity

development. Cross's Nigrescence theory creates the foundation for the theoretical framework for this study.

Summary of Methodology

The methodological approach for this study will be qualitative using a constructivist grounded theory research design as developed by Charmaz (2014). Charmaz (2014) recognizes grounded theory methods as being one that "consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories from the data themselves" (p. 1). This study will include ten participants whose undergraduate collegiate experience took place at an HBCU. All participants took part in multiple 45-to 60-minute semi-structured interview sessions to generate the constructivist grounded theory and interviews were conducted by the sole researcher of this study. Prior to the initial interview sessions, participants completed a participant sheet which allowed them to self-report demographical information that was used in this study. Upon completion of the participant sheets and the interviews, there were two phases of coding, as recommended by Charmaz (2006), which identified themes among the participants and develop a grounded theory for Black male identity development for Black males who attended HBCUs.

Limitations

A limitation to this study was my unconscious bias. Identifying as a Black male, I attended a predominantly White institution throughout my educational journey. However, one of my regrets has been not attending an HBCU. This has caused me to develop a fictional HBCU experience from images delivered through the media. To control my unconscious bias, I wrote reflective memos to address any preconceived notions of Black males who attended HBCUs. This helped to minimize the impact my bias had on this research study.

Definition of Terms

Black Identity – The definition of Black identity for the purpose of this dissertation comes from Cross, Smith, and Payne (2002) who define Black identity as "the passing down from one generation to the next the learned experiences and identity activities that facilitate Black adjustment and humanity under conditions often framed by race, racism, and the proactive dimensions of Black culture" (p. 94).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) - HBCUs are defined as "institutions established before the Civil Rights Act with the sole purpose of educating African Americans" (Patterson, Dunston, & Daniels, 2011, p. 154).

Nigrescence - Nigrescence is defined as "the process of becoming Black" (Cross, 1991, p. 147).

Chapter Summary

This study was formulated from the research gap for Black male identity development, specifically for those who attended HBCUs. This qualitative study used a constructivist grounded theory research design to explore the experiences and external influence for Black males at an HBCU. Eight Black males who attended and graduated from an HBCU participated in semi-structured interviews sharing their story of identity development. From these interviews, a Black male identity development theory was developed for Black males who attended an HBCU. The next chapter will focus on the literature involving Black males in college and Black males at HBCUs.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Research involving Black males in the postsecondary context is beginning to transform and evolve with a shift in language from what limits Black males academically to what helps Black males succeed in college (Strayhorn, 2013; Wood, 2014; Wood & Williams, 2013). Shifting the research from what limits Black males in college to how Black males are able to succeed has been a recent focus of scholars (Strayhorn, 2013; Wood, 2014; Wood & Williams, 2013). This literature review is divided into four sections which include: 1) Black males in college and how Black males achieve academic success; 2) Historically Black Colleges and Universities through the years; 3) Black males at Historically Black Colleges and Universities and how they achieve academic success in this setting; and 4) the guiding theory used to answer the research questions for this study.

Black Males in College

College enrollment for Black males in 2017 represented 33% of the higher education male population between the ages of 18 and 24, an increase of the 25% Black male representation from the year 2000 (NCES, 2019). Similar to the increase in enrollment, the total number of degrees conferred for Black males has increased. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2017), conferred degrees for Black males have increased from 9.5% in the 2000-01 school year to 11.7% in the 2015-16 school year for associate's degrees; 7.5% in the 2000-01 school year to 9.0% in the 2015-16 school year for bachelor's degrees; from 7.4% in 2000-01 school year to 11.1% in 2015-16 school year for master's degrees; and, from 4.8% in the 2000-01 school year to 6.4% in the 2015-16 school year for doctoral degrees.

With the increase in both enrollment and conferred degrees through the years for Black males, there has been more research dedicated to Black males in college. A salient topic through

the literature is the academic success of Black males and how they persevere through higher

education (Strayhorn, 2013; Wood, 2014; Wood & Williams, 2013). Specific research topics for

Black males and their academic success in higher education include perseverance factors (e.g.,

see Kim & Hargrove, 2013; Strayhorn, 2013; Wood, 2014; Wood & Williams, 2013) and

changing the narrative (e.g., Boyd & Mitchell, 2018; Harper, 2009, 2015; Harper & Davis 2012).

This section of my literature review will discuss the current research involving these two

subcategories as they apply to Black males and any identifiable research gaps.

Perseverance

Increased enrollment in college for Black males has created the need to change the

narrative of research regarding Black males in higher education (Allen, 1992). Historically,

research on Black males has been presented through a negative lens (Kim & Hargrove, 2013;

Harper, 2009), looking to identify factors that hinder degree completion of Black males in

college, while using language such *disadvantaged*, *marginalized*, or *underrepresented* (e.g., see

Ashbaugh, Levin, & Zaccaria, 1973; Astin, 1971; Naylor, Wyatt-Nichol, & Brown, 2015;

Stanley 1971; Strayhorn, 2011; Trachtman, 1975). Some researchers have transitioned to

examine what factors help Black males to persevere in the higher education setting (e.g.,

Strayhorn, 2013; Wood, 2014; Wood & Williams, 2013).

Strayhorn (2014) published a study examining the importance of grit—defined as the

combination of perseverance and power (Datu, Yuen, & Chen 2018)—for Black male success in

college. Strayhorn recognizes the attrition for Black males in college to be categorized within

one of the following: environmental, social, or psychological. Strayhorn further breaks down

each of these categories with environmental factors "focusing on aspects of campus ecology or

prevailing ethos that either affirm Black male collegians' sense of belonging, facilitate their

involvement in the academic and social life of campus, or marginalize them in ways that deny access to supportive networks" (p. 2). Strayhorn's environmental category supports Fleming's (1984) study stating Black males will struggle academically when they are a part of a hostile environment on their college campus.

According to Strayhorn (2014), social factors that inspire or inhibit success for Black males in college offer important conclusions regarding Black male success academically. Strayhorn stated, "Black males' academic success, or lack thereof, is a function of meaningful interactions with diverse peers, supportive relationships with university faculty and staff, as well as frequent and educationally purposeful engagement in campus activities and student organizations" (p. 2). Strayhorn places a cognitive and behavioral component in the psychological category.

With limited studies addressing grit and how it impacts the academic success of Black male college students, Strayhorn (2014) seeks to fill this research gap. Specifically, Strayhorn examined Black males who attended a 4-year predominantly White institution, seeking to answer two research questions. The first research question was "what is the relationship between grit, as measured by the Grit-S questionnaire of Duckworth et al. (2007), and Black male collegians" (Strayhorn, 2013, p. 3); the second research question was "Does grit add incremental predictive validity for explaining college grades over and beyond traditional measures, controlling for age and a batter of potentially confounding variables" (Strayhorn, 2013, p. 3).

Strayhorn (2014) utilized an existing survey which was being used in a larger research study. The sample for Strayhorn's study included 140 Black male students who attended a predominantly White public university located in the southeastern United States. Over half of the participants were first-generation college students. Data were collected during the Spring 2008

semester with the survey instrument being the Black Male Student Success Questionnaire. This questionnaire was designed by Strayhorn for this specific study and consisted of 50 items to measure the students experience in college. The four major sections of the survey were: demographic information, student engagement, student transition and adjustment, and non-cognitive traits. Data analysis consisted of three stages which were descriptive statistics, exploratory correlation, and hierarchical regression analysis.

Strayhorn (2014) found that girt is positively associated with academic outcomes for Black males by influencing their grades. Also, Strayhorn found grit can positively predict achievement in challenging domains more than talent alone. Strayhorn concluded his study supporting the idea of successful academic achievement being more than just the amount of energy given but is the product of effort and talent. Strayhorn wrote this study can be used to positively influence policy and interventions for Black males in higher education. Limitations of this study include all survey participants attending the same institution, which limits the generalizability of the study.

A critique of this study is the use of the term *grit*. Datu, Yuen, and Chen (2018) define grit as the combination of determination and perseverance; however, there is a racist undertone that comes with the term grit (Miller, 2018; Socal, 2014). Socal (2014) acknowledges using the term grit separated the rich and the poor by assuming the poor need to work harder with the resources they have to make their way to the top while the rich do not need to work any harder. Golden (2015) adds to this argument about the term grit by explaining it is mostly used when referring to urban communities; the term urban communities is often used to replace racial minority.

Researchers have been able to reduce the racist undertone of grit by using terms such as *persistence* and *perseverance* (e.g., Wood, 2014; Wood & Williams, 2013) when conducting research around Black males. Wood (2014) examined the academic variables that influence Black male persistence in community colleges, focusing on the academic variables with the belief that persistence and attainment are influenced greater by academic variables (e.g., grade point average, course completion, individual course grades) compared to social variables (e.g., extracurricular activity involvement, participation in mentor programs). This study adds an additional layer on to Strayhorn's (2013) study by broadening the scope of influence to include academic factors.

Wood's (2014) study used the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS) to examine what academic variables influence Black male persistence in community colleges. This study identified 11 covariates that were examined which were: 1) grade point average; 2) ever received incomplete; 3) ever repeated course for higher grade; 4) ever withdrew after add or drop deadline; 5) number of stop-outs; 6) major change; 7) remedial courses: any taken; 8) faculty informal meeting; 9) faculty talk outside class; 10) participated in study groups; and 11) meets academic advisor. Wood found the following variables were predictors of Black male persistence and attainment: grade point average; receiving an incomplete; repeating a course for a higher grade, withdrawing from a course after the add or drop deadline; and informal meetings with faculty. Controlling for environmental factors was a limitation of this study as environmental factors have shown to have an effect on persistence.

Although Wood (2014) showed a limitation in his research for environmental variables, similar to Strayhorn (2014), Wood and Williams (2013) explored how environmental factors, along with academic, psychological, and institutional factors influence Black male persistence in

college. Through their study, Wood and Williams found environmental factors to be a function of persistence for Black males in college. Participation in intramural sports were also found to be an indicator of persistence but found student engagement in extracurricular activities is a negative predictor of persistence. Academic variables were found to have a positive impact on persistence for Black males in higher education. Wood and Williams recommended further research to be conducted to explore further the variables of environment, academic and social and how they influence persistence for Black males. Researchers help to expand the research in the areas of environment, academic, and social settings in college by allowing Black males to tell their story of success in their own words.

Changing the Narrative

While researchers have continued to discuss the achievement gap between Black males and their White male counterparts (e.g., see Allen, 2015; Bailey & Bailey, 2006; Ford & Moore, 2013; and Webb & Thomas, 2015) in the education system, there has been a shift in the literature to begin discussing Black male academic success in postsecondary settings and allowing Black males to create their own narratives (e.g., Boyd & Mitchell, 2018; Harper, 2009, 2015; Harper & Davis 2012).

Harper (2009) presented a counternarrative of the traditional research of Black males in college. Harper utilized elements of critical race theory in order to discuss a different perspective of academic success for Black males. Beginning with a conversation around the word Nigger and how it is used to oppress people of African descent, Harper explains the term Nigger is actionable and a Black male student can be *niggered*. Examples given within this study is Black males being niggered by being told they are not going to accomplish much in life or they are no good and will not be successful in school. The counternarrative for this study was designed for

three reason: 1) research around Black males have placed them as being underachieving and unlikely to succeed; 2) Black males who are not enrolled in college are more likely to be accused of niggering; and, 3) the limited narrative of Black males who have refused to be niggered in the postsecondary environment.

Harper's (2009) phenomenological qualitative study uses a tenet of critical race theory, counternarrative, to guide this study. This counternarrative comes from engaged Black male college high-achiever instead of the troubled low-achieving Nigger. Findings from this study were derived from the National Black Male College Achievement Study and includes 143 participants attending 30 predominantly White institutions. Recruitment of participants were completed using the criterion sampling method with administrators nominating Black male undergraduates who met the following criteria: 1) grade point average above 3.0; 2) lengthy records of leadership and engagement across multiple student organizations; 3) developed relationships with faculty and administrators beyond the classroom environment; and, 4) earned merit-based scholarships and honors for their college achievement.

The counternarrative presented in Harper's (2009) study comes from five Black men[2] who attended different predominantly White institutions and were assigned to sit at the same table at a conference held by Harper for those who participated in a previous study he conducted. The counternarrative presented at this table was how these Black males avoided being niggered on their college campuses. One participant explained they combated niggering by becoming involved in organizations that others did not expect Black males to be involved in, such as student government. While some at the table agreed this was an effective way to combat niggering, another participant explained how the lowered expectations of Black male participation on college campuses is a form of racism. This participant continues their discussion

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by saying it is important to combat this racism by calling it out when it happens. Although all participants had different viewpoints when it came to being niggered on a college campus, they were all able to agree the positive energy of being in a room full of successful Black males was an amazing feeling.

Results of Harper's (2009) study supports the lack of research around the population of Black males who are academic achievers and leaders both inside and outside of the classroom. Harper noted these Black males will experience both racism and success which causes them to become involved in multiple student organizations and create meaningful relationships with same-race peers. They will also resist niggering through positive self-representation and by confronting racism on their college campus as it happens (Harper, 2009). However, one participant of Harper's study noted this resistance would be unnecessary if White administrators would create policies that did not support the stereotyping and stigmatizing of Black males. Findings from this study support a previous study by Harper and Nichol's (2008) that all Black males in college are not the same but the research often presents them as being troubled, oppressed, and hopeless. Harper suggests those who expand the research around Black males must provide alternative insight to the popular negative dispositions for Black male achievement by allowing Black males to create their own narrative, which is a trend that continues in the research involving Black males in college.

Harper and Davis (2012) continue the counternarrative approach by providing Black males an opportunity to discuss their experience in education through their study "They (Don't) Care About Education." This study consisted of 304 undergraduate students who wrote a 650-word essay to apply to a summer academy designed for academically high achieving Black males seeking an internship. Findings from this study highlight a different narrative for Black

males in the areas of 1) educational inequities, 2) education as the great equalizer, and 3) purposeful pursuit of the Ph.D. in education.

Participants of this study discussed how policies and practices in primary, secondary, and post-secondary impact the Black male educational experience (Harper & Davis, 2012). A commonality among participants was the lack of resources in their K-12 schools and how their experience with same race and gender teachers was either limited or non-existent. Although the resources improved as they entered the postsecondary system, the experience of being able to learn from a faculty member who looked like them did not change. Even though these participants understood the inequities in education, they felt as though education is an equalizer for Black males. Many of the participants were encouraged to go as far as they could in their educational pursuits by family members who had little education. One participant discussed how getting an education helps to liberate Black males through the increased knowledge of their journey.

Harper and Davis (2012) continued their discussion by supporting the idea that Black males care about education. Through the acknowledgement of the inequities of education and how the system continues to provide limited resources to school that educate high populations of Black students, the participants of this study still believed education could level the playing field for Black males. This study also refutes the acting White theory presented by Fordham and Ogbu that Black males will avoid professions with a significantly White racial presence (as cited in Harper & Davis, 2012). Both studies from Harper (2009) and Harper and Davis show the importance of changing the narrative when it comes to Black males in college. Black males enjoy being in the presence of other positive Black males (Harper, 2009) and appreciate the importance of education as the great equalizer (Harper & Davis, 2012).

Harper (2015) continues the conversation of Black men overcoming racism on the college campus by exploring stereotype threat and how it impacts Black males on predominantly White campuses. Participants of this study presented similar reports to Harper's (2009) study suggesting taking on leadership roles helps to minimize the racism one will encounter from an institution's faculty and administration. Although all the participants from both studies were Black males with a grade point average above 3.0, these participants felt to change the narrative for Black males on their college campuses, they needed to be seen in a leadership capacity. Participants in Harper's study found that even though they were able to change the perception among the faculty and administration when they were in these leadership roles, they were not able to do the same among their White peers on campus. Harper proposed a three-step method to address stereotypes for Black males on college campuses. The first step is the comment based on stereotypes (e.g., "what sport do you play?"). The second step is the response addressing the microaggressor (the person who made the initial comment in the first step) that causes them to reflect on the generalization they just made (e.g., "What makes you think I play a sport?"). The final step is for the microaggressor to reflect on the generalization they just made in hopes they will realize they just made their comment based on a stereotype.

Harper (2009, 2015) and Harper and Davis (2012) studies have provided the opportunities for Black males to provide their story using their own voice in their own words. Although these studies have strengthened the research involving Black males in college, there are also limitations of these studies. One limitation of these studies is that all studies came from the same data set that had the same requirements for all participants. Each study included participants that were considered to by high achieving and leaders at their current institutions. Harper (2009) explained the reasoning for this as in order to change the narrative around Black

male college experiences being presented negatively, it is important to explore how Black males are maintaining their success in education. Still, it is important to acknowledge not all Black males who are successful in education and graduate from college are high achieving academically or are considered leaders on campus.

Selection of participants in these studies is identified to be another limitation. Those who were able to participate in the survey were recommended by administrators on their respective campuses. An unconscious bias could have been in place from the administrators' points of view. Knowing they were recommending the participants for the study and unsure how the data were going to be used, this could have caused them to recommend students they felt would shed a positive light on their institutions. A large sample size helped the authors of these study to control for this some, but it is important to acknowledge this could have been in play with the recruitment of participants.

A more recent study that addresses some limitations of Harper (2009, 2015) and Harper and Davis (2012) studies, specifically selecting participants that did not qualify for Harper and Harper and Davis's studies, is Boyd and Mitchell's (2018) study. This study explored how Black males can persist in college while attempting to overcome stereotypes faced on campus. Boyd and Mitchell sought to examine how stereotypes on the college campus impact undergraduate Black men academically, socially, and psychologically. Critical race theory, stereotype threat, and anti-deficit achievement were the theories used to guide the framework of this phenomenological study which included six participants. Criterion sampling was used to identify participants for this study. The criteria for selection included: 1) self-identification as Black/African American[3]; 2) self-identification of male; 3) current undergraduate with sophomore standing or higher; and 4) a 2.0 or higher grade point average on a 4.0 scale.

Data were collected using two semi-structured interviews and observations. Upon completion of data collection and analysis, Boyd and Mitchell (2018) identified four themes present: 1) internalizations, 2) stereotypes, 3) persistence and 4) advice. Boyd and Mitchell found Black males in college were able to persist by confronting, ignoring, and dispelling stereotypes, as well as alleviating pressure. The participants of this study were able to help identify policy recommendations that could be put in place for Black men in college campuses. Creating, promoting, and maintaining a space where Black males can go to seek counseling, guidance, and support was a recommendation presented by Boyd and Mitchell. They noted intentional marketing can help to guide these Black males to this safe space. Another recommendation they offered is to provide students with stereotype threat bystander intervention training at the beginning of their freshman year. They offered helping incoming students understand the influence they are able to make by addressing the stereotypes they encounter, even when they do not pertain to them, can have a positive impact on Black males and the campus community as a whole. Boyd and Mitchell recommend furthering the research of Black males in college by including additional intersecting identities for Black males and how experiences may be similar or different across the subgroups.

Overall, Harper (2009, 2015), Harper and Davis (2012), and Boyd and Mitchell (2018) countered the deficit approach to research regarding Black males in college. The methodological approach of using counternarrative in each of the studies allowed for Black males to share their own experiences in their own words. Research in this area can continue to expand by allowing more voices to be heard such as non-traditional students, students with lower grade point averages, and students with limited exposure to extracurricular activities.

Research within this section included Black males at predominantly White institutions; researchers have also expanded the research within the context of Black males at HBCUs. The literature regarding Black males at HBCUs will be reviewed in this chapter. However, prior to this review, I felt it was important to provide a historical overview of HBCUs and their influence on the education system.

<p style="text-align: center;">**Historically Black Colleges and Universities**</p>

Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) were founded to provide learning opportunities for Black students in the United States when their options for postsecondary education was limited (Allen & Jewell, 2002; Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007). HBCUs are defined as "institutions established before the Civil Rights Act with the sole purpose of educating African Americans" (Patterson, Dunston, & Daniels, 2011, p. 154). As of 2019, there were 102 operating HBCUs in 23 states across the country (see Appendix A) that enrolled over 255,000 students (NCES, 2018a). The purpose of this section of the literature review is to provide an historical overview of HBCUs and to look at the enrollment and graduation trends for HBCUs through the years.

Historical Overview

Prior to 1950, over 90% of Black college students received their education from HBCUs with their education focusing on basic skill development, manual trades, and religious education (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007; Redd, 1998). The creation and development of the majority of HBCUs came from Black churches and since HBCUs received little to no state or federal funding, these churches were required to provide the funding for these institutions (Allen et al., 2007). This created a challenge for HBCUs as they needed the resources to deliver this education to students to fill that educational void but the Black churches could not fully fulfill

the financial burden, so schools had to seek funding from White missionaries and northern philanthropists (Allen & Jewell, 2002; Allen et al., 2007). Although these missionaries and philanthropists were willing to dedicate the funding to help run and maintain these institutions, this source of funding also allowed them to control the curriculum and goals of the institution (Allen et al., 2007).

Enrollment in the early years consisted of recently freed slaves or children of former slaves who were mainly Black, poor, and illiterate (Allen et al., 2007). With majority of the student population fitting this profile, HBCUs geared their curriculum to what would now be considered the level of secondary education and included limited college lever courses (Anderson, 1988, as citied by Allen et al., 2007). Since many of the institutions were funded by Whites, which allowed them to have control over the curriculum being taught at these institutions, there was more of a focus on liberal arts education as opposed to the traditional vocational education provided to Black students (Allen et al., 2007). Allowing Black students to receive a liberal arts education would help to develop Black leaders for the generations to come with a comparable education to the White institutions (Allen & Jewell, 2002; Allen et al., 2007). Due to segregation laws limiting where Black students could receive their education, Black students receiving a liberal education was important as HBCUs had the responsibility to training and developing Black doctors, teachers, and other professionals who had the ability to serve the Black community (Allen et al., 2007; Anderson, 1988; Jewell, 2002).

Although majority of the student population at HBCUs were Black, HBCUs provided diversity within their student body. HBCUs were the first institutions to open access to women in college (Allen et al., 2007; Jewell, 2002). The student population at HBCUs also included poor White students and international students (Allen et al., 2007; Jewell, 2002). Included in HBCU

student populations were also the children of the White missionaries who helped to open and maintain the HBCUs as these missionaries felt it was important for their children to be taught in the same classroom as Black students; however, legislation made it difficult for these White students to be taught in the same room as Black students (Allen & Jewell, 2002). Diversity not only came in the classroom for students, but also as HBCUs began to diversify both their faculty and administration (Allen & Jewell, 2002). HBCUs would continue down this path for years to come until there was a shift in legislation in the 1950s (Allen & Jewell, 2002; Allen et al., 2007)

       The case *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) had a major influence on education. Specifically, for Black students, *Plessy v. Ferguson* would say though Blacks and Whites in the United States are educated in different areas, these students are receiving an equal education. This case would be known for the phrase "separate but equal" (Allen & Jewell, 2002). Even though the court system ruled education was equal across the board for Blacks and Whites, Black students would experience significantly underfunded schools and facilities and still would have a lack of resources to deliver education to students (Allen & Jewell, 2002; Allen et al., 2007). Starting in the 1930s, lawsuits challenged the ruling "separate but equal" (Allen & Jewell, 2002). While these lawsuits did little to influence change in education for Black schools and students, in 1954 a shift was created with the Supreme Court reversing the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case with the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954). This case called for the desegregation of schools allowing Black students to begin taking courses at institutions who traditionally did not accept them (Allen et al., 2007).

       Desegregation of schools would present its own challenge after the ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) as Whites in the south would resist the U.S. Supreme Court's decision (Jewell, 2002). As *Brown v. Board of Education* only pertained to public schools, White

families across the country would remove their children from the public education system and enroll them into private schools with better resources that Black families could not afford (Allen & Jewell, 2002). This struggle for Black students would continue until the passing of The Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Allen & Jewell. 2002; Allen et al., 2007). The Civil Rights Act (1964) made it illegal for institutions to discriminate based on race, color, or national origin if they were receiving federal aid (Allen et al., 2007). This forced the hand of institutions requiring them to admit Black students and creating a 110% increase in enrollment for Black students between 1964 and 1969 (Allen et al., 2007). This enrollment increase included both HBCUs and predominantly White institutions (PWIs), and by 1975, 75% of Black students attending college were enrolled in PWIs (Allen & Jewell, 2002). In 1965, underfunding of HBCUs through the years was recognized by the federal government and the passing of the Higher Education Act of 1965 allowed HBCUs to receive additional funds reducing the funding gap between HBCUs and PWIs (Allen et al., 2007).

Even with the desegregation laws and additional funding, states continued to resist desegregating their schools (Allen et al., 2007). It was not until the 1990s in the case of *United States v. Fordice* (1992), which upheld the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, that the state of Mississippi would be required to desegregate their higher education system. Passing these laws allowed Black students to begin enrolling into PWIs having a negative impact on Black student enrollment at HBCUs (Allen & Jewell, 2002; Allen et al., 2007). Due to the existence of HBCUs, the enrollment and graduation for Blacks has been positively impacted through the years.

HBCU Enrollment and Graduation Data

Data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2018a) indicate that student

enrollment at HBCUs consisted of 222,613 students in 1976, 13 years after the passing of the

Civil Rights Act of 1964. Of the 222,613 students, 104,669 students identified as male and

117,944 students identified as female; and, 206,676 students attended a 4-year HBCU, while

15,937 attended a 2-year HBCU. While 156,836 students attended a public HBCU (143,528

were enrolled in a 4-year public; 13,308 were enrolled in a 2-year public), 65,777 students

attended a private HBCU (63,148 were enrolled in a 4-year private; 2,629 were enrolled in a 2-

year private). Enrollment continued to fluctuate but showed an increase between the years of

1976 and 2017 with the peak of enrollment occurring in 2010 with 326,614 students enrolling in

HBCUs. After the enrollment peak in 2010, enrollment began to decline with the 2017 student

enrollment being 298,138 (115,324 male students; 182,814 female students), with 225,179

enrolled in a public HBCU (188,212 students were enrolled in a 4-year public; 36,967 were

enrolled in a 2-year public) and 72,959 enrolled in a private HBCU (72,438 were enrolled in a 4-

year private; 521 were enrolled in a 2-year private). Although there has been an increase in

student enrollment through the years, a majority of the increase can be attributed to the public

HBCUs, which increased by 75,525 students through the 40-year period. HBCUs identified as 2-

year private had the greatest decline in enrollment reducing their student enrollment by 2,108

students over the 40-year period.

Black student enrollment at HBCUs also increased throughout the 40-year period as

reported by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2018a). In 1976, HBCUs

enrolled 190,305 Black students, which was 85.5% of the total enrollment at HBCUs. This

percentage decreased in 2017 by 9 percentage points to 223,515 Black students enrolling in

HBCUs, representing 76.1% of the total enrollment at HBCUs. A majority of the Black students who enrolled in HBCUs enrolled in public institutions. In 1976, 68.2% of the total Black student enrollment were students who enrolled in a public institution. In 2017, this percentage increased to 71.7% of the total Black student enrollment at HBCUs enrolling in public institutions.

Similar to enrollment, there has also been an increase in degrees conferred at HBCU through the years. According to NCES (2004, 2018b), degrees granted by HBCUs have also increased from 1976. In 1976-1977 school year, there were 33,251 degrees award by HBCUs. The degrees awarded during this year included 2,753 associate degrees, 23,351 bachelor's degrees, 6,150 master's degrees, and 797 doctorate/first-professional degrees. Although there was a slight decline in degrees conferred through the years, the numbers started to increase again, and in 2016-2017, there were 49,467 degrees conferred at HBCUs. The degrees conferred during the 2016-2017 academic year included 5,511 associate degrees, 33,500 bachelor's degrees, 7,966 master's degrees and 2,490 doctorate/first-professional degrees. Of the degrees awarded in 2016-17, Black males were awarded 730 associate degrees (13.2%), 9,273 bachelor's degrees (27.7%), 1,595 master's degrees (20%), and 535 doctorate degrees (21.5%).

Graduation rates for Black males at HBCUs who entered with the 2010 cohort were lower than the graduation rates for all Black males during those years. Black males at HBCUs had a 10.9% four-year graduation rate; 22.8% five-year graduation rate; and, 27.7% six-year graduation rate. For all institutions, Black males had a 16.6% four-year graduation rate; 29.6 five-year graduation rate; and 34.3% six-year graduation rate (NCES, 2019b).

While the enrollment and degrees conferred have trended positively for Black males through the years, graduation rates for Black males at HBCUs shows to be lower than the graduation rate of all Black males at all institutions. Given this information, research around

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Black males continues to evolve including what promotes academic success and the academic challenges faced by Black males who attend an HBCU. The next section reviews the literature around promoting academic success and academic challenges for Black males who attend an HBCU.

Black Males at Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Given Black males were awarded over 25% of the total degrees conferred in 2016-2017 at HBCUs, they receive a higher proportion of the conferred degrees awarded to Black males than at non-HBCU institutions (3.1%; NCES, 2018c). Although the overall population of Black males at HBCUs is smaller than those of non-HBCUs, the difference in degrees conferred between the two institution types shows support for the need to research Black males at HBCUs and how they are able to pursue through these institutions. The purpose of this section is to examine literature around Black males at HBCUs through the last 10 years and how it has evolved. This section will explore two overarching themes regarding research of Black males at HBCUs: 1) promoting academic success and 2) academic challenges.

Promoting Academic Success

Research around Black males in college continues to evolve and as the realization has developed that HBCUs, by proportion, are graduating more Black males than PWIs, research exploring the ways Black males have been academically successful at HBCUs has grown (e.g. see, Palmer & Davis, 2012; Palmer, Davis, & Hilton, 2009; Palmer, Davis, & Maramba, 2010; Palmer & Gasman, 2008; Palmer & Maramba, 2012; Palmer & Young, 2009). Palmer, Davis, and Maramba (2010) conducted a study that focused on academic success for Black males and how HBCUs contributed to this academic success. Through their study they wanted to explore what factors contributed to academic success for Black males who entered HBCUs through a

remedial or developmental program and how they were able to persist towards graduation. Palmer et al.'s study included 11 Black men who participated in in-depth interviews using a constructivist methodological approach. Participants in this study attended a public, doctoral research HBCU and, prior to enrolling into the HBCU, completed a summer program designed to facilitate students through the transition from high school to college. This six-week residential summer program included 300 students who were divided into cohorts of 20 and was geared towards students whose grade point average and/or ACT/SAT scores which suggested the need for early intervention.

Palmer et al. (2010) conducted 90 to 110-minute face to face interviews with each participant with the goal to understand what academic and social factors promoted the success of Black males at their institution. Participants of this study identified four challenges that impacted their academic success. These challenges were: 1) insufficient financial aid; 2) pride that prevented them from seeking help; 3) problems at home and in their local community; and, 4) ability to interconnect with academic success.

Although Palmer et al. (2010) identified challenges, their study also helped to identify how HBCUs were able to promote academic success for Black males. Participants in this study stated they were able to overcome the challenges presented at HBCUs for Black males by the university racial homogeneity. Knowing they were around other Black males who wanted to be successful, helped them to continue working towards becoming successful. Encouraging faculty members and supportive peer groups were two other contributors identified by the participants in this study to help overcome the challenges to academic success for Black males at HBCUs.

While Palmer et al. (2010) allowed students to identify what their institution did to promote academic success for Black males, Palmer and Maramba (2012) worked with four

student affairs practitioners to identify what interventions have worked for Black male students at HBCUs. Participants of this study worked at a public, doctoral research institution in a mid-Atlantic state. The four participants of this study worked outside the traditional student affairs arena but worked closely with faculty members to help identify and develop interventions for underperforming students. Data collection for this study consisted of one 50 to 60-minute face-to face-interview.

Similar to Palmer et al. (2010), Palmer and Maramba (2012) found a way to promote academic success for Black male students is through authentic caring from administrators and faculty members. Palmer and Maramba define authentic caring as "consistently displaying interest and concern for Black men's well-being and success in college" (p. 104). Palmer and Maramba also found that engagement matters in the promotion of academic success for Black male students on HBCU campuses. Engagement consisted of out-of-class engagement and engagement in the classroom specifically geared towards Black males that expanded beyond the curriculum. With the combination of authentic caring and engagement, they found HBCUs can create an environment where Black males feel as though they matter on the campus which helps to increase the likelihood of their persistence through college. In order to provide this environment, Palmer and Maramba noted institutions must be more proactive in implementing conditions of mattering and support across campus.

While Palmer et al. (2010) and Palmer and Maramba's (2012) studies both focused on the academic and social factors that helped Black males to persist to academic success, Palmer and Young (2009) explored the educational and personal factors that contributed to the academic success of underprepared Black males at HBCUs. This qualitative study consisted of 11 participants who were of junior or senior status at the time the study was completed and

participated in a six-week summer bridge program prior to their enrollment into the institution. Participants completed a 70 to 90-minute face to face interview.

Findings from Palmer & Young (2009) support the findings from Palmer et al. (2010) and Palmer and Maramba (2012) in that supportive faculty help Black males to persist towards academic success. Palmer and Young identified this support as faculty being concerned about Black males beyond the classroom concerning their general welfare. Palmer and Young (2009) were able to add a layer on to the findings from Palmer et al. (2010) and Palmer and Maramba (2012) in that Black males take personal responsibility for their success suggesting that Black male academic success is a joint responsibility between the student and the university. Palmer and Young noted universities need to provide necessary resources for Black males to be successful while Black males must create and maintain the motivation for academic success.

Whereas Palmer and Young (2009) were able to explore personal experiences and how it influenced academic success for Black males, Palmer and Gasman (2008) conducted a qualitative study to examine how social capital influenced academic success for Black males at HBCUs. This study included 11 participants who participated in a 70 to 90-minute face to face interview. Each participant completed a six-week summer bridge program prior to their enrolling into the institution.

Palmer and Gasman (2008) developed five themes from their participants that helped with academic success for Black males at HBCUs. These five themes were: 1) faculty relationships, 2) going above and beyond, 3) relying on peers for motivation and encouragement, 4) role models and mentors, and 5) supportive campus community. The findings from this study support the findings from Palmer et al. (2010), Palmer and Maramba (2012), and Palmer and Young (2009) that positive faculty and administrative relationships with Black male students

help to positively impact Black male success at HBCUs. Also, they found Black males who are connected to their campus can become academically successful.

Palmer, Davis, and Maramba (2011) add an additional layer on to the factors that influence academic success for Black males at HBCUs stating that familial support is important for Black males who attend HBCUs. With similar study participants as Palmer and Young (2009), Palmer et al. (2011) found family ties to be linked to the academic success of Black males at HBCUs. Palmer et al. recommended HBCUs consider how significant family is to Black males at HBCUs and to use this connection as families of Color are able to support and encourage students in ways the institution does not.

Considering these studies have provided groundwork for institutions to create an environment that promotes academic success, there are limitations of these studies. One limitation is the demographics of each study are similar. Although this might provide transferability for similar institutions, it does limit the application of the findings from these studies (Palmer et al., 2010; Palmer et al., 2011; Palmer & Gasmen, 2008; Palmer & Maramba, 2012; Palmer and Young. 2009). Another limitation of these studies is they all consist of underperforming students as their research participants. Knowing what factors influence high-achieving students is also important as it cannot be assumed that all Black students who attend an HBCU are underperforming.

Goings (2016) conducted a study that addressed the limitation of underperforming students as research participants. In his qualitative study, Goings used purposeful sampling in order to recruit participants who met the following criteria: 1) identified as a Black male; 2) undergraduate degree completed at an HBCU; and, 3) graduated with at least a 3.0 grade point average. Each participant completed a semi-structured interview with one interview being face-

to-face and the other interview being conducted over the phone for an hour. Follow-up interviews were conducted over the phone for clarification.

Goings (2016) found the support of professors was the most salient factor in academic success for the high achieving participants in this study. This finding supports the findings from Palmer et al. (2010), Palmer and Maramba (2012), and Palmer and Young (2009) that creating a positive relationship between the faculty/administrators and the students on HBCU campuses will positively impact the academic success for Black males. Goings also found that high-achieving Black male students on an HBCU campus experience *achiever isolation* (Fries-Britt, 1998, as cited by Goings, 2016). These high-achieving students felt they were being judged by their peers and this contradicts what was found during the studies for underperforming students that found peer support promoted academic success for Black males (Palmer et al., 2010; Palmer & Maramba, 2012; Palmer & Young, 2009). Although Goings finding contradict that of other researchers in terms of peer support, Goings does acknowledge the need for further research regarding Black male high-achievers at HBCUs and peer support in promoting academic success.

Academic Challenges

While it is important to know and understand what promotes academic success for Black males at HBCUs, it is also important to know and understand what challenges Black males go through at HBCUs while attempting to achieve academic success. As noted earlier, Palmer et al. (2010) identified four challenges Black males overcome on their quest towards academic success at HBCUs. Palmer, Davis, and Hilton (2009) provide support to these findings of challenges Black males go through at HBCUs. Their study consisted of 11 Black males who participated in a 90 to 110-minute interview. These participants all attended an HBCU in the mid-Atlantic

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United States. Palmer et al. (2009) found financial assistance to be a challenge that impacted the academic success of Black males at HBCUs. Due to the high need for financial assistance for students who attend HBCUs, Palmer et al. found many of their participants had to work a full-time job while going to school full-time as well.

Pride was another challenge Palmer et al. (2009) found to impact academic success for Black males at HBCUs. Participants of this study reported they were too prideful to seek out help from the resources provided by the institution. While it was discussed earlier that strong student and faculty relationships were a factor in promoting academic success (Palmer et al., 2010; Palmer & Maramba, 2012; Palmer & Young, 2009), Palmer et al. found some students were too prideful to seek out and create these relationships with faculty members, which caused a challenge towards their academic success.

The final challenge identified through Palmer et al.'s (2009) study was the situations occurring at home or in the community of the participants. Participants identified an array of situations that occurred outside of their school environment that had an impact on their academic success. Palmer et al. note these situations are not limited to crime in the neighborhood but are varies situations that keep the students connected to home. Suggestions for this challenge from Palmer et al.'s (2009) study are for Black males to maintain contact with their families and communities they come from as it will be hard for them to create separation while they are away at school.

Palmer (2013) conducted a study to address what barriers impact the persistence for Black males at HBCUs. In this study, Palmer interviewed four retention specialists at an HBCU to understand what impacts student retention and persistence toward graduation and found the lack of motivation and defined goals as barriers to persistence for Black male students. This lack

of motivation then placed students in a situation of being ineligible for financial aid which causes an additional barrier. The final barrier identified by Palmer is the hesitancy for Black males to use campus resources to improve their academic success. The findings from this study support the findings from Palmer et al. (2009) being that financial aid and pride create a challenge for academic success for Black males at HBCUs.

As research continues to expand regarding Black males, it is important to include Black males in the context of HBCUs (Palmer et al., 2009). While Black males are showing academic success at HBCUs (NCES, 2018c), understanding how their experiences influence their identity is also important. This study aims to expand the research for Black males at HBCUs by developing a grounded theory on how their experiences influence their identity.

Theoretical Framework – Cross's Black Identity Theory

While Black identity theories have been developed by many researchers (e.g., see Helms, 1984; Jackson, 1975; Thomas, 1971), the theory that will guide this research study is Cross's (1971, 1991) Black identity development theory. With a psychological undertone, Cross's theory was developed from a call from Joseph White regarding the need for research and development in Black psychology. Cross answered this call with the creation of his Black identity development theory that outlines the process of Blacks in American and how they progress through their own understanding and realization of what it means to be Black in America during adulthood. This process is called *Nigrescence* and is defined as "the process of becoming Black" (Cross, 1991, p. 147).

The Negro-to-Black conversion consists of five stages, which are: 1) *pre-encounter*, 2) *encounter*, 3) *immersion-emersion*, 4) *internalization*, and 5) *internalization-commitment* (Cross, 1971). Cross (1971) states during the pre-encounter stage, the Black person visualizes the world

from the Euro-American perspective. This perspective causes Black people who are in this stage to minimize Black history and think Black people came from an uncivilized continent and Black history began with the freedom from slavery in 1965. Blacks in the pre-encounter stage minimize the cultural impacts of Black traditions while viewing the White man as "intellectually superior and technically mystical" (Cross, 1971, p. 16). Seeking self-advancement as opposed to group advancement is a priority for Blacks in the pre-encounter stage as they have an "I" over "we" mentality. This mentality causes them to limit their loyalty to Black owned businesses and other Black professionals. Cross identifies the Blacks in this stage as Negros and are considered as such until they experience an event that challenges their belief.

An event that occurs which causes a Black person to become interested in their assumptions about being Black is the start of the encounter stage (Cross, 1971). Cross (1971) explains this event can be something an individual recognizes on their own or something that happens to a person. An example provided by Cross was the death of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., which took a lot of Negros out of the pre-encounter stage and into the encounter stage. Experiencing the event is not the only component of entering the encounter stage. After the event is experienced, the individual rethinks their view of the world based on the event they encountered. This causes them to question their approach to other Black people and they begin to quietly submerge themselves into the Black culture. Shifting the thinking in the encounter stage causes individuals to begin to feel guilt for their previous thinking regarding other Blacks. As their guilt turns into rage, the transition from Negro to Black continues as there is an advancement from stage two encounter to stage three, immersion-emersion.

Focusing on Blackness and continuing with Black rage, while adding guilt and a development of Black pride are characteristics that one has entered stage three immersion-

emersion (Cross, 1971). Cross (1971) noted Blacks in this stage are liberating themselves from Whiteness while the process of immersion into Blackness continues. The rage towards White culture is strong during this stage while the emphasis is being placed on Black culture which includes reading and creating Black literature, wearing African-inspired clothing, developing an interest in "Mother Africa" (Cross, 1971, p. 18), and dropping the name Negro and using Afro-American, Black, Black-American, or African.

Cross (1971) defines the fourth stage as the most difficult and complex stage to explain as it can cause either frustration or inspiration. Within this stage, Cross identifies three nonproductive options for individuals who have reached the stage of internalization. These nonproductive options are: 1) *disappointment and rejection*, 2) *continuation and fixation at stage three*, and 3) *internalization*. Disappointment and rejection come from the expectations created in stage three about being Black not being met. Not meeting the expectations pushes individuals to believe in the "[W]hite man's 'magic'" (Cross, 1971, p. 21). Continuation and fixation at stage three is where the individuals who were not able to move past the hate developed for White people at stage three and stay fixated on that emotion. Internalization is where individuals are able to integrate features from the immersion-emersion stage into their self-concept and become happy with who they are. This internalization is done without commitment and people who are in this stage are known as the "nice Black people" (Cross, 1971, p. 21).

Individuals who have successful progressed through the previous four stages reach the fifth and final stage of internalization-commitment (Cross, 1971). This stage is for those who have been able to maintain their new self-image that it has now become their new identity. This transformation is developed by a person who no longer cares about how others see them but develop the confidence to be who they want to be in the world. Cross (1971) recognizes this

transition being a shift in their anger towards Whites to anger towards the racism, policies, and oppression that were developed by Whites. The anger by Blacks in this stage is more controlled. The difference between a Black person at stage four and stage five is those who are in stage five have committed to a plan that influences their Black identity while attempting to positively influence their community.

Cross expanded and revised his original Black identity development theory in 1991. These changes included reducing the theory from five to four stages, by combining stage four internalization and stage five internalization-commitment. Cross (1991) noted there are few differences between Blacks who are in the fourth stage and Blacks who are in the fifth stage. Cross also changed the language used throughout the theory to be similar to the language used in the Black community at the time of the theory revision. Cross dropped the term Negro and replaced it with Black and incorporated African, African American, Black, and Black American as identities Blacks were working towards.

Cross and Fhagen-Smith (2001) updated Cross's theory of Black identity development to expand it through the life span of an individual. Cross and Fhagen-Smith identified six sectors of identity: 1) *infancy and childhood*, 2) *preadolescence,* 3) *adolescence,* 4) *early adulthood,* 5) *adult Nigrescence,* and 6) *Nigrescence recycling*. Sector five of this revised theory is the traditional Cross Black identity development theory that includes the four stages of Black identity development presented by Cross (1991). This revision to the theory included the development of Black identity through the adolescent years. Due to Cross recognizing there is no difference between stages four and five in his Black identity development theory and the heavy focus of adolescent years in the latest revision of the Black identity development theory by Cross and Fhagen-Smith (2001), I have chosen to use Cross's (1991) theory to guide this study.

Cross's (1971, 1991) Black Identity development theory has been a foundational theory for other Black identity development theories, but has not fallen without criticism (Constantine, Richardson, Benjamin, & Wilson, 1998). Constantine et al. (1998) identified Cross's theory as a mainstream Black identity theory, and yet, identified four limitations to the theory among other Black identity theories. Regarding limitations to mainstream Black identity theories, Constantine et al. stated:

> First, mainstream approaches may be interpreted as depicting Black identity development as a linear process. Second, the mainstream approaches tend to generalize the stages of racial identity development to a broad range of Black individuals. Third, there is nothing explicitly imbedded in the mainstream approaches indicating that knowledge and awareness of other world views (e.g., Afrocentricity and African axiology) exist as alternatives to idealizing Whiteness. Another area of concern is that mainstream approaches may tend to conceptualize Black culture as representing a situational way of reacting to oppression, as opposed to a coherent and enduring system of African and Black American cultural practices. (p. 97-98)

A recommendation presented by Constantine et al. (1998) to address the limitations of mainstream Black identity theories is to recognize the role of other sociodemographic identities play in the development of racial identity. Constantine et al. (1998) suggested scholars acknowledge the intersections of these identities with race and to include them in the development of Black identity theories by stating "Some current models of Black racial identity have tended to assume that all Black Americans perceive and experience racial issues similarly" (p. 98).

Harper and Quaye (2007) were able to address this limitation by adding gender and exploring the connection of Black male college students who participated in organizations on a postsecondary campus and their racial identity. Harper and Quaye found these Black males, who were in Cross's final stage of Black identity development, were able to navigate working with White students while maintaining their Blackness. Although no theory was created through their study, Harper and Quaye also found majority of the Black students who were engaged on campus were engaged in predominantly Black student organizations which aided in the development of their Black identities. Taking the findings from Harper and Quaye (2007) that Black males develop their identity in predominantly Black student organizations a step further, this study uses Cross's (1991) revised Black identity development theory to explore Black male identity development for Black men who attended HBCUs.

Chapter Summary

Black male enrollment and graduation rates have increased through the decades and scholars are now understanding the importance of sharing their experiences. Experiences of Black males have been captured through their academic, social, and environmental experiences on college campuses at both HBCUs and PWIs. Researchers have explored the perseverance of Black males in college; allowed Black males to share their experience in their words by using counternarrative techniques; and, the success and challenges Black males face when attending HBCUs. Even with the growth in the research regarding Black males in college, there still are no identity development theories for Black males. This study will address this gap in research.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

Developing a theory of Black male identity development for those who attended

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) was the purpose of this study. This

purpose was achieved by answering the following research questions:

1. How do the experiences at a Historically Black College and University influence the

   identity development for Black males?

2. What external factors influence identity development for Black males who attend a

   Historically Black College or University?

This chapter provides information about the methodological approach used to guide this study in

addition to Cross's (1991) Black identity development theory. In this section, I provide an

overview of the research methodology and design that was utilized in this study. Participant

selection and demographics are identified with a table including information about each

participant. Furthermore, I explain how I collected and analyzed data for this project. Finally, I

discuss how I was used as the instrument to collect and analyze data and my positionality on the

research topic of Black male identity development at HBCUs.

Methodology

Qualitative research takes the research participants perspective and experiences to define

a social phenomenon in order to provide meaning (Merriam, 2002; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Ravitch and Carl (2016) emphasis the importance of the researcher being used as the instrument

for data collection, analysis, and interpretation in qualitative research. There are many different

approaches to qualitative research which include but are not limited to 1) action research, 2) case

study research, 3) ethnography, 4) evaluation research, 5) grounded theory research, 6) narrative

research, 7) participatory action research, 8) phenomenological research, and 9) practitioner research (Merrriam, 2002; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Case study, grounded theory, narrative research, and phenomenological research are all approaches that provided options for use in this research study. Since this study expanded beyond a specific case and could not be bound by time, case study was not selected as the methodological approach for this study. Narrative research allows the participants to share their story with the researcher (Merriam, 2002); however, this study developed a theory regarding Black male identity development for males who attended an HBCU. Due to the lack of theory development in narrative research and the focus on one or two individuals (Creswell, 2013 as cited by Ravitch & Carl, 2016), narrative research was not used for this study's research design. My study addressed a specific phenomenon of Black male identity development on an HBCU campus while going a step further of developing a theory. For this reason, grounded theory was selected as the methodological research design for this study.

Research Design

Grounded theory was originally developed by Glasser and Strauss in 1967 as a qualitative method that provided researchers the ability to develop theory from data with flexible guidelines (Charmaz, 2014). As with other qualitative methodological approaches, grounded theory uses the researcher as the instrument in data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2014). Beginning with the data requires researchers to have an open mind throughout the process as the data can shift the direction the researcher was intending to proceed (Charmaz, 2014). Charmaz (2014) further developed the grounded theory approach created by Glasser and Strauss by articulating constructivist grounded theory which acknowledges that researcher's values influence the facts they intend to identify.

Although there is flexibility in the grounded theory process, there are specific steps that must be taken when conducting a grounded theory study. According to Charmaz (2014) grounded theory, similar to other research methods, starts with the initial research question. From the research questions, researches then recruit participants for their study which leads to the data collection process. Initial coding begins during the data collection process which can begin to create new data. Once the initial coding has been completed, the research moves to focused coding and development of themes, which help the researcher to identify theory. The final step in this process through grounded theory is the write-up. Progressing through grounded theory may seem like a linear process, but the researcher may fluctuate between data collection and theory building several times prior to advancing to the write up component of the theory (Charmaz, 2014).

Creation of a theory is the main component to why I chose grounded theory to guide my research study. Grounded theory afforded me the opportunity to expand the research regarding Black male identity development specifically for those who attended an HBCU. Furthermore, grounded theory allowed me to collect information from the voices of Black males who can provide a voice for their own experience for Black male identity development. Allowing Black males to have their own voice in the research was a recommendation discovered through the literature review (Harper, 2009).

Participants

This study consisted of eight participants who voluntarily agreed to share their story of their personal identity development and how attending an HBCU influenced their identity development. Criterion sampling was used to qualify participants for this study. Ravitch and Carl (2016) defined criterion sampling as "based on an important criterion, all cases that meet the

criterion are studied, implicitly (or explicitly) comparing the criterion cases with those that do not manifest the criterion" (p.130). Meeting the following criteria qualified participants for this study: 1) participants must have attended and graduated from an HBCU; 2) the entirety of their undergraduate coursework must have been completed at an HBCU; 3) must self-identify as Black or African American; and, 4) must self-identify as male.

With the specific criteria for participation in this study, direct recruitment was used to solicit participants. This solicitation included emails, text messages, and social media posts (see Appendix B). In addition to the direct recruitment, referrals from participants who complete this study were also accepted. Recruiting participants in this manner is known as snowball sampling which is when the researcher "start(s) with one or a few relevant and information rich interviewees and then ask them for additional relevant contacts, others who can provide different and/or confirming perspectives" (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 134). All participants were required to review an informed consent (see Appendix C) to participate in this study which included their rights in this study. The option to revoke consent was available to each participant throughout the duration of the study. Revoking informed consent at any time would have removed participant from the study completely. No participant invoked their right to be removed from the study. After the initial meeting and signing of the informed consent, a $20 amazon gift card was given to those who participated. Seven of the eight participants accepted the gift card and signed an incentive form required for my institution's records, and one participant declined the gift card.

Participants were asked to complete a participant information sheet to provide background data. Pseudonyms are used to protect the confidentiality of each participants; these pseudonyms are in memory of the Black men who were killed as a result of police brutality and racial discrimination. Participants understood that after signing their informed consent,

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anonymity cannot be guaranteed. It was explained to them the steps I took to ensure

confidentiality of all participants in this study. Table 3.1 and Table 3.2 below show the

participant demographics as reported from their participant information sheet.

Table 3.1

Demographics of Participants

Pseudonym*	Year Graduated	College Major	College GPA	Years to Complete Degree	Who Lived in Household	First-Generation College Graduate
Alton	1989	Music Education	2.89	7	Grandmother Two Brothers	-
Eric	2000	Criminal Justice	2.9	4	Mother and Brother	No
John	2007	Marketing	2.3	5	age 1-7 Mother Father; age 7-16 Mother, Aunt, Sister, Four cousins; age 16-23 Grandmother Grandfather and Great Grandfather	Yes
Mike	2007	Physical Education	3.2	4	Mother, Father, Two Brothers	Yes
Philando	2010	Studio Art	3.8	-	Mother, Sister, Brother in Law, Nephew, Niece	No
Oscar	2006	Accounting	3.97	4	Both Parents until five, Mother after five; Brother	Yes
Tamir	2000	Business	3.0	5	Five People	No
Trayvon	2009	Religion and Philosophical Studies	3.0	4	Mother and Two Siblings	Yes

Note. * Each participant was given a pseudonym to protect their identity.

    - Participant did not respond.

Table 3.2

Demographics of Participants

Pseudonym*	Household Income Growing Up	Occupation	Attended Graduate School/ Attended HBCU for Graduate School	Lived on Campus/ Years Lived on Campus	Institution Size	Black Male Role Model Outside of Family
Alton	20,000-39,999	IT	Yes/Yes	No	<1,000	Yes
Eric	20,000 – 39,999	Mental Health	Yes/No	Yes – 3	1,001 – 2,999	Yes
John	60,000 – 79,999	Educator	Yes/Yes	Yes – 4	3,000-9,999	Yes
Mike	20,000 – 39,999	Adult Education Instructor	Yes/No	Yes – 2	3,000-9,999	Yes
Philando	40,000 – 59,999	Contract Specialist	Yes/Yes	Yes - 2	3,000-9,999	No
Oscar	40,000 – 59,999	Strategy Manager	Yes/No	Yes - 4	1,001 – 2,999	No
Tamir	60,000 - 79,999	Educator	Yes/Yes	Yes - 2	3,000-9,999	Yes
Trayvon	20,000 – 39,999	Pastor/School Board Rep	Yes/No	No	1,001 – 2,999	Yes

Note. * Each participant was given a pseudonym to protect their identity.

    - Participant did not respond.

Participants included in this study came from a diverse background. The college graduation year for participants ranged from 1989 to 2010. Grade point averages for participants were diverse, ranging from 2.3 to 3.97. Participants completed their degrees anywhere from four to seven years and four participants identified as first-generation college graduates. Household incomes for participants ranged from $20,000 to $79,999. Six of the eight participants lived on campus and those who did live on campus lived there for at least two years. Every participant attended graduate school, but only half of the participants attended an HBCU for graduate school. Six of the eight participants reported having a Black male role model outside of their immediate family.

Data Collection

Participants completed a participant information sheet (see Appendix E) which provided background information about each participant. In addition to the participant information sheets, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with each participant. Each interview consisted of predetermined interview questions and lasted approximately 60-minutes in length. There was an initial interview with each participant as well as one follow-up interview. The initial interview helped to develop themes regarding Black male identity development at HBCUs. The follow-up interviews expanded on the themes found in the initial interview. This process is known as theoretical sampling in which themes are found during data collection and additional interview questions are developed based on the themes found (Charmaz, 1996; Mitchell, 2014). Initial and follow-up interviews occurred either face-to-face and or via phone at the participants preference. Participants had the option to conduct interviews through video conferencing, but no participant selected that option. Follow up interviews also consisted of predetermined interview questions to ensure all participants were asked the same questions as

recommended by Charmaz (2014). All interviews were audio-recorded and sent to a third-party company to be transcribed.

The purpose of conducting interviews was to create a theory for Black male identity development for Black males who attended an HBCU. For this reason, intensive interviewing was used with participants where I then incorporated focused questions into follow-up interviews. According to Charmaz (2014) intense interviewing is "a way of generating data for qualitative research. It typically means a gently-guided, one-sided conversation that explores research participants' perspectives on their personal experience with the research topic" (p. 56). To prepare for the intense interviews, I developed an interview guide to assist in navigating through the interview (see Appendix D). This guide contains a list of questions that was asked of each participant. To ensure the questions developed addressed the research questions, a pilot interview was conducted with a Black male who met the selection criteria. After the pilot study was completed, some interview questions were removed as they did not solicit responses that would address Black male identity development. During the interviews, participants' responses guided the interview. This means follow up questions that came to my mind after a response may be asked before the next written question. These follow up questions were written down and documented in order to ask other participants during their interviews. Once data collection was complete, I officially began the data analysis process.

Data Analysis

Charmaz (2014) expresses the importance of beginning initial coding at the start of data collection when conducting a study using grounded theory and continues throughout the entire research process. During data collection, I took notes of commonalities of Black identity development as they began to emerge across multiple participants. After seeing the ideas of how

Black male identity develops during the first round of interviews, I developed an interview protocol for a second round of interviews focusing on the themes that emerged (see Appendix F). This second round of interviews were specific to the developing themes to provide additional data and support as recommended by Charmaz (1996).

Beginning with initial coding, I started to organize data into broad categories which were developed throughout the data collection process. Once the data were coded into the major themes, I transitioned from my initial coding to focused coding. Focused coding is "a sequel to initial coding in which researchers concentrate on the most frequent and/or significant codes among their initial codes and test these codes against large batches of data" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 343). During the focused coding process, each theme was broken down into subthemes that were developed from the data coded into the different themes. Once focus coding was complete, I used the themes and subthemes to develop a theory regarding Black male identity development at HBCUs.

Memos, which are "a way to capture and process, over time, your ongoing ideas and discoveries, challenges associated with fieldwork and design, and analytical sense-making" (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 70) were used throughout the data analysis process. Memos were used to help document my findings throughout the process. Memos also helped to ensure I did not influence my own thoughts or decisions into the data that were being analyzed. As the instrument used to collect the data, it was important to reduce bias throughout the data collection process to maintain trustworthiness.

Researcher as the Instrument

Being the sole researcher for this study, I was responsible for collecting, maintaining, and analyzing the data. Given that responsibility, it was important that I maintained the integrity of

this study and also provided opportunities for the findings in this study to be used in additional research studies. This required me to maintain the trustworthiness of this study. Below I will explain what steps I took to maintain both trustworthiness.

<div align="center">

Trustworthiness

</div>

Trustworthiness ensures the researcher takes steps to accurately portray participants' responses in their research study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) identify four areas for trustworthiness. These areas are credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Bloomberg and Volpe define creditability as "whether the participants' perceptions match up with the researcher's portrayal of them" (p. 202). To control for creditability, I used the technique of member checking. This required me to ensure my understanding of what the participants were attempting to convey to me aligned with what the participant's overall message. I also used journaling and reflexivity to address any biases I may have had in the participants' responses. Ravitch and Carl (2016) define reflexivity as a "systemic assessment of your identity, positionality, and subjectiveness" (p. 15). This allowed me to remove my biases prior to analyzing the data. Dependability is defined as "ensur[ing] the research process is clearly documented, logical, and traceable" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019, p. 204). Controlling for this required me to develop an audit trail that could be presented if another researcher wanted to duplicate my study. I was able to outline the process taken from beginning to end and could be used if my study were to be duplicated.

Confirmability is the third area of trustworthiness defined by Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) and they define this as "establishing that the researcher's findings and interpretations are clearly derived from the data, requiring the researcher to demonstrate how conclusions have been reached" (p. 204). Journaling and reflexivity and the audit trail described above also helped to

control for this area of trustworthiness. The final area of trustworthiness is transferability. Bloomberg and Volpe define transferability as "how well the study has made it possible for readers to decide whether similar processes will be at work in their own settings and communities by understanding in depth how they occur at the research site" (p. 205). I was able to use rich and thick descriptions which Bloomberg and Volpe recommend as a way to provide trustworthiness in the area of transferability. My goal when I used the rich and thick descriptions to help readers develop contextual meaning through the findings of this study.

Maintaining trustworthiness in this study helped me to ensure the rigor of this study was maintained. As the sole research, I had to collect and analyze the data without losing any of the integrity. In the next section, I explain what it meant to be the sole researcher of this study and how I was used as the instrument. I also discuss my positionality as the sole researcher of this study.

Positionality Statement

Ravitch and Carl (2016) define positionality as the researcher's role and social identity with regards to the research location. To effectively perform qualitative research and utilize the researcher as the instrument, it was important for me to identify how the participants would perceive me prior to going into the research setting. This afforded me the opportunity to recognize any perceived biases or assumptions I had about the research study prior to working with participants. My personal identity is as a Black male who is a follower of Christ, acknowledging God as my higher power. I am a husband, father, son and brother whose political views most closely align with the democratic party, but I do not call myself a democrat. As a college graduate, I attended predominantly White institutions throughout my educational career.

As one who identifies as a Black male, I felt a connection to the participants in this study and understood the experiences Black males shared as they progressed through college. However, I was able to remain open minded as my college experience and attending a PWI was different from the participants as they all attended HBCUs. It was important for me not to compare my experience in college to those who are participated in this study and I had to remind myself of that throughout the data collection and analysis process. This was not my story to tell and I had to allow my participants to share their experiences and their experiences only.

In addition to the intersection of my identities, I also attended a predominantly Black high school that was low performing academically. Many graduates from my high school attended HBCUs within my home state but did not persist through graduation. An unconscious bias was present in this regard in which I had to keep at bay. While it was not a significant issue, acknowledging it helped to keep my mind open while I progressed through data collection and analysis.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the methodology used during this research study. Grounded theory is the research design I selected that guided this qualitative study. The study included eight Black males who attended an HBCU during their undergraduate years who were recruited to participate in this project to share their stories of Black male identity development. Data were collected through participant information sheets and semi-structured interviews. Follow-up interviews were formulated through the process of theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 1996; Mitchell, 2014). Throughout the data analysis process, member checking was used to improve trustworthiness. Along with member checking, thick descriptions were also used to help

improve trustworthiness. Data were transcribed into themes to create a theory of Black male

identity development for those who attended HBCUs.

Chapter 4 – Findings

The focus of this study is Black male identity development for Black males who attended an historically Black college or university (HBCUs) with the purpose of developing a theory of identity development for Black males in the HBCU setting. In order to develop this theory, the following research questions were used to guide this study along with Cross's (1991) Black identity development theory:

1. How do the experiences at a Historically Black College and University influence the identity development for Black males?

2. What external factors influence identity development for Black males who attend a Historically Black College or University?

To answer these research questions, eight participants who self-identify as Black or African American and as male were interviewed. Each participant went through an initial semi-structured interview as well as a follow-up interview. The follow-up interview was derived from common themes that emerged during the initial interview. This chapter focuses on the findings from the participant interviews and provides evidence to support a Black male identity theory containing five areas of identity development occurring for Black males who attended an HBCU, which are: 1) acknowledgement of being a Black male; 2) Understanding all Black males are not the same; 3) Creation of an authentic professional identity; 4) Progression through Cross's Black identity theory; and 4) transition to a Black male role model.

Acknowledgment of Being a Black Male

Identifying as a Black male was a requirement to participate in this study. To ensure all participants identified as a Black male, each participant was asked to describe what it meant to be a Black male and when they began to identify as a Black male. From the descriptions of what

it means to be a Black male, a common theme of pride emerged from the participants. Given this common theme, participants were asked in a second round of interviews what it meant to be a proud Black male and when they began to feel proud to identify as a Black male. The following sections reflect the subthemes that emerged from the participants responses.

To be a Black Male is to Be…

Participants in this study were recruited in order to share their story of their experiences of being a Black male while attending an HBCU. In order to fully understand the influence their story would have on their identity development, it was important to know what it meant to identify as a Black male to each participant. To gain this perspective from each participant, I asked each participant to describe what it means to be a Black male. Participants defined their idea of being a Black male being connected to family, spirituality, ancestors, and strength. This strength was also connected to history. John gave his description of a Black male:

> [B]eing a Black male just means, number one, I'm a man of strength. I think, based off our heritage and things that we've gone through over a number of years, I've just noticed the strength of Black men overall is particularly strong. I see a lot of Black men in terms of like trying to overcome a lot of resistance and being resilient, and basically just trying to make a strong mark in today's society.

Similar to John's response, Tamir stated, "To me a Black male, especially in America is a sense of strength to me because knowing what our ancestors went through in America, the Black man is nothing we can't do," noting the importance for the Black male to pay respect to his ancestors. Eric also believed the Black male needs to pay respect to where they come from, specifically in regard to the neighborhood they grew up in. Eric added another layer stating the importance of

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the Black male to be proud in representing his family. Eric also believed the Black male needs to be connected to his community stating:

General[ly]. I think the Black male is a staple of the community. I think we're the leaders of the community. We have the responsibility of everybody in the community on our shoulders. Kids, women, old folk. I believe that the Black man is responsible for everybody.

Oscar placed his description of being a Black male on a spiritual level but also agreed with John, Eric, and Tamir with the importance of there being strength and a connection to their heritage. Oscar described a Black male as:

[T]o be God. I'm to see myself as the first and I'm the originator of all. That's just some information that I've come across later on in my life, because when I was younger, I wasn't too much of aware of the rich history that we actually have as descendants of Africans.

Community impact was important for Philando as well. However, to Philando, identity as a Black male is situational. Philando describes three different areas where identifying as Black male requires a different situation. The first situation is being a Black male in your own community and the importance of being a positive role model for others in the community. He stated:

If I'm in my own community like now I think it, at least for me, it means for me to be an example, a role model, you know for many generations and just a voice of positivity for those I grew up with that and others who are caught up in the system, had to be blessed with same opportunities that I have. If I can do it, thinking about where I came from, make a positive impact, pursue my dreams, then so can they. So, I think in our

community I think it's to be a voice of reason with some positivity, an example, role

model.

Another area in which the description for Black male identity may be influenced is when

the Black male is in academia. Within this setting the Black male is the representation of those

who are not privileged to the opportunities within higher education and the Black male has to be

comfortable with representing their community. Philando continued:

I think in academia, all the different traces that I function in. I think in academia it's

really, really hard but you really have to be cognitive of, be the face of the community

almost, especially in higher ed, you get the advanced degrees. It's not a lot of minorities,

let alone Black males. So, I think I represent an entire culture when it comes to how they

portray me, how they look at me. So, I can be aware of any implicit biases that they may

have. Any hidden assumptions and how I present myself, how I present my work.

The final area that influences a Black male's identity according to Philando is within the

larger context of the world. Philando recognized the desirability of being a Black male along

with the fear the world has towards Black males. He further explained:

And then in the world, in the larger population, I think that we are fear. We are desired. I

think our culture, our style, our power is desired but at the same time we're feared

because we have that negative stereotypical connotation that comes along with being

Black, being a Black male in America. We get targeted a lot by law enforcement and

policy that are inequitable.

This oppressive viewpoint was not limited to Philando as Trayvon also described being a Black

male through an oppressive lens. Trayvon stated:

To be a Black male is to live with, lived through, at least a by dimensional reality of

navigating life with the...obstacles presented by race. And to be Black in America is to be

an often oppressed or sometimes hunted, locked, but then Black men also struggle with

issues pertaining to class and often disallows to flourish economically to be hired as for

certain jobs. And so to be a Black man is to attempt to navigate society, walk, carry into

the appendages that race and class confers up on us and sort of be a Black male in

America is, to every day be confronted with the reality of the necessity of navigating the

society that is tilted towards your destruction.

After hearing their description of what it means to be a Black male, I was curious as to whether

or not Trayvon felt any positivity in identifying as a Black male. Trayvon believes there is

positivity but feels the positiveness of being a Black male is overshadowed by the oppression

that is encountered by Black males along with the system that is created for Black males to fail.

Trayvon stated:

I think positivity cause there's the cultural points that are positive. There are the historical

elements that are positive. But when you, when you think about being a Black man in

America overall, it's a pretty bleak picture. It is a picture that is Black men are hunted

often by, sworn police officers. Black men are unfortunately comprising of the highest

rates of incarceration. Black males just have a fundamentally difficult time in America, in

American society.

Participants agreed being a Black male required strength and connection to the history of

not only of being Black in America but being a descendant of Africa. While the oppression of

being a Black male was recognized by the participants, there is a positive component with being

a Black male. Once participants were able to define what it meant to identify as a Black male, they were then able recall when they began to identify as a Black male.

I Became a Black Male…

Having the definitions from each participant of what it means to be a Black male, I wanted to know when each participant began to identify as a Black male. The timeframe of identification varied among the participants, but each participant could recall when they were able to identify as a Black male and the context as to how they recognized their identity. Eric recalls their experience of realizing they are being treated different at the age of five. Although they thought this experience was normal, they were informed by their mother that their experience was influenced by their race. Eric recalled when he began to identify as a Black male:

> As early as five years old, I realized I was being treated differently than other kids. And not necessarily just because I was a Black kid but because I was a taller Black kid. I'm playing soccer at five years old and my mother had to literally bring my birth certificate to the game every week because people would constantly question my age. And whereas you could understand and say, "This kid is abnormally tall." But on the other hand, he's saying, "These Black kids" and this is how my mom presented it to me, like, "They think I would bring my child here to just dominate some other younger kids. Like I'm a cheater, we're cheaters, we're this and that."

Mike also realized in elementary that things were not the same with him as it was with everyone else stating, "I went to a predominantly White elementary. So [I] did notice that there were not too many people with skin tone and look like [me]" and Tamir had a similar experience just from living in the South:

I grew up in the South, so I say at least kindergarten. You knew that kindergarten, preschool, you knew that you were different… I mean we was always different. you stood out and you wanted to be better. So, I guess it's something that at early age is always been there.

For other participants, attending a predominantly White school provided them with experiences they needed to recognize themselves as a Black male. Trayvon shared:

I went to an all-White private school and it was clear to me that in that context that Black boys were treated differently than White boys. My friends [and] I bore the brunt of what it meant to be Black in a White world and the microcosm of that classroom. So, I think I've always been aware of it to some degree.

Philando has a similar story of their Black male identity being recognized from being in school. His Black male identity was influenced by being able to complete what he would call "Afro-centric" courses. This which helped to develop a sense of pride and increased knowledge about who he was regarding his Black male identity:

I've always been a Black male, but I think really getting into what it means to be a Black man, I would say high school, tenth grade year. My ninth-grade year I went to a Catholic private high school which was a mixed population but majority White. I went there and I went to some public school. So, the public school, I'm not sure how the public school got teachings from the afro-centric perspective… I think from there really developed a sense of pride, sense of history, knowledge about self, community. That's really where I fully got in tuned with what it means to be a Black man.

Oscar was an early bloomer as well when it came to identifying as a Black male. However, his identity was influenced by a teacher who guided him to the realization that he was different and needed to understand what that meant:

> I probably didn't start to identify as a Black man until I probably was in about the fifth or sixth grade. And I think that was due to me having a Black female teacher who really instilled in me the importance of who I was as a man, but in particularly a Black man in America and what that would portray, what that would look like for my future.

John also had some outside help in the realization that he was a Black male. This help came from his father who acted as a positive role model for John and helped him to identify as a Black male:

> It was just always natural, I guess, you know, because earlier in my life, I was raised with a Black father and I always consider myself to be a protégé of him…he was always somebody I wanted to be like when I was younger, so, and he would consider himself to be a Black man. So, I just say I'm a Black man.

Tamir's father also helped him to understand what it meant to be a Black male:

> I say early on, probably at least, probably like 10. Ten years old. My father used to work for a Japanese corporation. So, he explained me the difference between different nationalities and the way of life. So, I think that's one of the things that probably 10 years old.

Participants were able to identify when they acknowledge their identity as a Black male. Each participant was able to clearly recognize this identity being formed at a young age. While each participant experienced their identity recognition in different ways, each identity was acknowledge based on an external factor. For many it was a parent or a teacher who helped them

to see what it meant to be a Black male, for others, it was the experience of being exposed to a specific environment or situation. When participants recognized they were Black males, they also recognized there was another step in the process of developing their identity—pride in being a Black male.

Proud to be a Black Male

With participants beginning to identify as a Black male at a young age, this helped to create a sense of pride among all the participants pertaining to their identity. Participants were asked to define when they began to be proud in their identity and whether this pride was influenced by attending an HBCU. The common theme regarding pride was that it developed at a young age and was enhanced through attending an HBCU. Mike recognized his father for helping to develop his pride in being a Black male:

> I would say in high school, there's not necessarily a particular event or thing, it just, I would say even before that, that was something that was always just, reverent to me and my brothers and I…[M]y father was the first person that ever told me about Marcus Garvey. I didn't know or learn about Marcus Garvey in school until 12th grade, but my father was the first one to expose me to Marcus Garvey years before that… I feel that's what made me become a proud Black man.

While Mike's father was given credit for developing their pride, attending an HBCU helped to enhance his pride by seeing Black professionals. Mike stated, "Yes, a lot of it is influenced by, it's in the HBCU because you can see Black professors, Black president and provost, people in higher positions that you didn't see in other places." Mike was not the only one whose pride was influenced by external factors at a young age. Eric also acknowledged his pride developing early stating "I think for me it happened a little early."

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Eric told a story about one of his coaches in high school trying to convince him to play football. He was not interested in playing football but had a passion for playing basketball. Since he told the football coach he would not play, he was put off the basketball team. His coach was soon fired, and a new coach came and stated they were excited to begin working with Eric. This moment was the moment that Eric developed his pride. Eric stated:

> But at that point I had gotten control over myself and who I was going to be. And so, I was always proud of that moment because, although they were telling me I couldn't do what I really wanted to do, I had enough reserve in me to say, "No, I'm just going to prove them wrong. I'm not going to argue, rant, or rave. I'm not even going to go seek any help or guidance. I'm just going to do it and make sure I do it myself." So, it was a proud moment. And I think, ever since then, I've been making myself proud and being that individual. People telling you, you can't do stuff, I'm definitely going to do it if that's what I needed. If that's what I want to do, I'm going to do. I'm going to figure it out. I'm going to find a way. And that moment kind of always stands out to me when I tell my story because I feel like I became a man right there.

Trayvon also developed his pride at a young age that was influenced by national external factors. Trayvon stated:

> I think it was kind of woven in me from a kid. I took notice of men from the nation of Islam standing clad in suits, in bow ties on street corners [in my hometown], selling papers. I took notice of the way that Louis Farrakhan articulated his thoughts, his passion, his depth of insight, his ability to interpret world events over and against history, over and against sacred theological traditions of Christianity and Islam. When he would, when his speeches would come on television, and there was a certain pride to watching a Black

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man do that… So, when you talk about, when did Blackness become impressed upon me, from a kid.

Trayvon's pride was enhanced through the academics delivered at an HBCU. Trayvon continued:

Once I got to college, it was formalized in a way. Yeah, it was formalized academically. Take literature for example, the premium was not placed on Shakespeare, or Faust, or Harriet Beecher Stowe. The premium was placed on Zora Neale Hurston, and James Weldon Johnson and all of his masterpieces, and Nikki Giovanni. That's where the premium was placed. So, there was sort of, I would call it a re-education.

History was an influence in the development of pride for Trayvon. Philando also had his pride influenced by his reflection of Black history. He stated:

I think there's a sense of pride because through all these obstacles we're still here. I think our history, what you read about our history, that instills a sense of pride. I think even in America's history, what we've gone through, what we've overcame, instills a sense of pride. Our culture's rich. Our strength is one of our assets. I think it's good, it's a medal to be worn, it's an honor and privilege even though it's hard.

Philando described his pride developing at a young age:

I think the levels of being proud differ and the reasons differ as you mature. So at first, it's a saying that everybody wants to be Black and nobody wants to be Black. Right? Everybody wants the benefits of being part of the culture, but nobody wants the negative side of being Black. So, I think at the early age, middle school, high school, I was proud to be Black because being a Black male as far as in the media, in social media, it was a cool thing.

Even with the development of pride at a young age, Philando believes there are levels to pride that are influenced by the increased maturity of a Black male when he enrolled in college. He explained:

[A]s I matured and got into college and grad school, really in grad school. Then it was being proud to be that example, to be that person that's forging their way into places that we normally are not allowed or normally you don't see Black professionals. So, I got proud of doing that and proud of my history and our culture of history, our heritage and things like that. So, I think I was always proud, but the reasoning behind it changed and matured along with when I matured…I think a HBCU gave me a foundation for higher education as far as being proud and self-worth and self-identity and self-knowledge. I think I would've been successful no matter what.

John's pride in his Black male identity was a general pride. John embraced who he was at a young age and was able to translate that pride into his work as he grew older. John explained:

I was always happy with who I was. Even at a young age, I just always appreciated everything about myself. There was never a situation where I was ashamed of anything that I was. I was always accepting. But I will say when I've gotten older and it had to be shown and used as an example that I'm proud to be a Black man as when I'm working with younger men, I knew I had to show that and kind of express it verbally and really let the younger guys know like it's okay to be who you are. You're not who you're defined by through the media and everything else. So, it was more of a for the sake of the culture and the youth, I had to show and express that I was proud to be a Black man.

The professional HBCU experience is what enhanced the Black male pride for John when asked if attending an HBCU influenced his pride as a Black male he responded, "Yeah. I would even say it was then enhanced when working at a HBCU as a professional."

Oscar's Black male pride developed later than the other participants, but his pride was directly connected to their HBCU experience. Oscar stated:

> I think for me it was probably my freshman year in college, when like, I started applying for like internships and things of that nature. And then I finally ran away when I went into the room, I realized I was the only Black male in there and the only one that represented an HBCU, which for me that was a proud moment for me. And, just recognizing how strong and how influential I could be as a Black man.

Pride in identifying as a Black male was consistent across the board for all participants as no one stated any regret or anything they would wish to change about being a Black male. This response given by Tamir would sum up how the participants felt about being a Black male: "I wouldn't want to be anything other."

A Proud Black Male is…

After explaining their pride in being a Black male, participants were asked to describe characteristics of a proud Black male. Common themes were self-awareness, connection to the community, and the willingness to help others. John described the importance of knowing who you are and understanding the negative events do not shape your identity as a proud Black male. John stated:

> I think it just means to be a person that's fully aware of his self and just being aware of your position and knowing everything that comes with it and embrace it. The negative as well as being aware and proud of the positive…Like I'm proud of the things that go well

as a Black man. And I'm also aware of those things, negative things that have happened

to me, but those negative things don't define me. They may have molded me and pushed

me to this point of where I am now, but they're not the things that define me.

Mike has a similar response as he explained the need for a proud Black male to give credit to

those who came before him and providing that knowledge to the next generation of Black males.

Mike stated:

I would say that it is one who is not afraid. One who holds his head high, not ashamed or

afraid of who they are. One who's aware of the dis-privilege and the privilege of being a

Black man but one who does not disrespect those that came before them, but one that

wants to enhance the image of Black men and one who wants to pay it forward to young

Black men as the help raising the next generation of Black men.

Oscar also gave his response with the importance for the Black male to reach others

through mentorships while remaining confident in who he is by stating, "I'd definitely say like a

mature, confident, a man of integrity. I think one who, I guess willing to mentor and help others.

I think also one who, are sure who they are as a person."

Eric took his response a step further by incorporating the requirement for the Black male

to give to the community. Eric explained a proud Black male is someone who reaches beyond

themselves in order to help the community in which he resides. Eric stated:

Proud Black male. Outstanding citizen in the community. Well respected professionally

and personally with an extensive network. I think your network is your net worth, and, if

you're proud and you are being the man that you're supposed to be, your network should

be vast. And so, I think for a Black male you need to be a good father. You need to be a

good worker and contributor. And the type of person that people seek out for assistance.

And they're comfortable with seeking out for your assistance. And you take pride and

assisting others. And a father of all, not just, "Oh, this is my child." Any room I walk in

and there's kids in there, I feel like the father, and I accept that responsibility to be that.

And I think as a proud Black man accepts the responsibility of everybody.

To be proud to be a Black male required a sense of self-awareness according to the

participants in this study. That self-awareness addresses both the positive and negative impact of

being a Black male. As the self-awareness is developed, participants in this study recognized the

importance of making sure they connect with others and embracing their community.

Attending an HBCU Put the Icing on the Cake

Each participant within this study recognized their identity as a Black male occurring

prior to enrolling into an HBCU. Although they identified as a Black male prior to enrollment,

participants stated the influence enrolling into an HBCU had on their identity and how they

began their development moving forward. John discussed how his HBCU experience was

foundational to his identity development as a Black male. John explained:

I would say it was one of the most foundational experiences that I ever had. You know,

that brought me to be in the person I am now. Again, I wouldn't have never knew that

there were other things even possible outside of what I knew about Black people at that

time until I went to HBCU.

In addition to these foundational experiences, John discussed how the make-up of the leadership

gave the opportunity for Black males to see someone like them in a position of power beyond

seeing Black male leadership in the church. John continued:

That's another thing because a lot of people leave that out. They say that churches are the

only Black institution that we have where you can see Black people in leadership. But we

forget about the HBCUs. It was, although most of them may be state funded and ran by and owned by the state. But it at least it gives us the opportunity to see Black men and women in the position of leadership as deans, associate vice presidents, vice presidents and presidents of the university.

Alton added to the conversation about being able to see other Black faces in leadership providing a positive experience for him while he was enrolled in their HBCU. Alton stated:

For me, it was good. Because again, being surrounded by, basically, just us at the time. [My HBCU] wasn't just an HBCU, it was completely still Black. The only White faces on [my HBCU's] campus was a couple of professors. All the students at that time were Black.

Seeing the Black faces in leadership was an important factor for the participants. For Oscar, it was not just the Black faces in leadership that helped him to develop additional pride in being a Black male, but it was the experience of being around other educated Black males and the environment that fostered their success. Oscar explained:

I would say just the overall experience. Just allowed me to pride myself as a Black man. But not only that, interacting with other individuals who attended HBCUs near mine was also an eye opening thing in terms of, hey, even though society does not really value African Americans or especially Black males, being in that environment where there were so many educated Black males like myself it just made me understand how, I guess how you talented we were, how educated we were, how bright and intelligent we were despite what the media and society tries to portray about African Americans.

Being enrolled in an HBCU provided unique experiences for all the participants while helping to expose them to Black leadership in executive positions. It also allowed them to be in

an environment surrounded by other Black males who were working towards the same goal of success. While the positivity is there for each of the participants, it is important to not overlook the challenges faced by Black males attending an HBCU.

Recognition of Challenges

There were both positives and negatives with being enrolled at an HBCU. The participants of this study address the positive experiences that helped to shape their identity as a Black male. There are also negative experiences that Black males go through while they are enrolled at an HBCU that influence their identity development. Alton acknowledges the role an HBCU has played in his professional life. The lessons that were taught to Alton helped him to understand when he was exposed to society beyond his HBCU, he would need to work harder for everything he earned. Alton stated:

> I wouldn't have worked harder for everything that I got than I think some of the other people around me. It wasn't just being [at an HBCU] in general. And I still see that occasionally, now, where you have to be twice as smart to get half as far. That was one of the harder lessons to learn. But at the same time, you have to be twice as smart to get half as far, and still not act like you are twice as smart.

To overcome those challenges, Alton realized it is important to know who he was and what he could do, he stated, "[Y]ou have to know what you're about, you have to know yourself, you have to know your ability, and you have to be humble about it. You get a lot further that way, sometimes."

While Alton's challenges occurred after he graduated, for other participants, their challenges occurred while they were enrolled in school. Although they were able to be in an environment where majority of the student population looked like them, Tamir recalls a time

when he was reminded in the community that, although he was enrolled in college, he was just another Black male in the community. Tamir explained:

> It was a time I was in a grocery store and it was this older White gentleman and he was talking to me and he asked me why I was there and I told him cause I go to school and he said the little Black school on the hill. So, I can always remember that and that made me think of, they just look at us, we ain't really that important.

Eric also experienced the challenges being in the community can bring and how attending an HBCU was able to help him navigate these challenges as well as accepting the welcome offered by the Black community. Eric stated:

> [W]hen I'm getting pulled over and all my friends are losing it because they know they're getting pulled over for nothing, it's like, you got to be calm enough to help them realize they pulled you over for nothing. And being irate and going into it doesn't help. So, it definitely gave me a little patience in dealing with people who prejudge me. I had to do that because when you go out into the community and we go to the Black parts of the community, we're praised. Like when I go to deal with the kids, "Oh, thank you for coming down here. You're such an impact on the community." And you go from that to getting pulled over for nothing for leaving from down there because all the other stuff that's going on down there. So, a lot of people are dealing with just the one aspect of the community. They don't see the other side of the aspect, so being at an HBCU allowed me to see both sides.

Eric recognized there are two sides a Black male must navigate when he was enrolled in an HBCU. There must be the connection to the institution as well as the understanding that there is a larger community the Black male has to learn to navigate.

This section of findings focused on the recognition of identity by Black males who attend an HBCU. This recognition of identity includes the development of pride in being a Black male and being able to describe what that pride looks like for Black males. Attending an HBCU helped to enhance the identity development for Black males, but this enhancement was not free of any challenges. On campus race was not a significant factor to Black males, but in the community at large, Black males continued to battle stereotypes and racism.

Understanding All Black Males Are Not the Same

Assumptions are made in the media that all Black males are alike. These assumptions have power on the younger Black males as they begin their own personal identity development. For participants in this study, there was a sense of shock when beginning their courses at an HBCU. Seeing other Black males provided them the opportunity to dismiss the assumption that Black males come from the same background. John's perspective was changed when he started classes at his HBCU:

> I really thought we will all are the same as Black man until I actually, until I attended an HBCU and that's when I knew that we all came in different shapes, sizes, colors, different classes. We had different beliefs. Up until that point, I believe[d] every Black person was a Christian. Everybody came from a one parent home and everybody didn't have a lot of money…They had, they all came from the same, pretty much the same socioeconomic class unless they were a celebrity…when I got to HBCU, I started to see that there were people that were different. They had different points of views.

Although there was a realization that all Black males are not the same, John stated the importance of feeling welcomed while he was on campus and he explained:

The only thing though, it was the social shock of the, that was a little different, but there

was never a feeling of not belonging, you know, there was always a sense of belonging

there that kept me around, but just adjusting to the initial, the initial cultural aspect of it,

like being in a new school, that new community was what was different, but it wasn't

anything that would allow me to quit.

Oscar discussed his drive to attend an HBCU due to being enrolled and growing up in an area

where there were not a lot of Black people. Oscar stated:

To be honest, I always grew up in a predominantly White area or a predominantly diverse

area and even though it was diverse, it wasn't a lot of Black [people]. So, I always had a

desire to attend a HBCU.

Oscar shared he had a similar experience to John as he was shocked to see the differences within

the Black student body and everyone bringing a different background to the table. Oscar

explained:

Initially, it was shocking. I wasn't used to seeing so many Black people in one area, but

that also showed me how different... Everyone was Black, everyone had a different

experience, everyone had a different upbringing and just saw how diverse it was even

within the Black community. So, it was a very shocking experience.

Again, like John, Oscar acknowledges the positivity that occurred from being around so many

people who had different backgrounds and how this had in impact on his identity:

I think it was just generally the overall experience and you know, just interacting with,

like I said before, other African Americans who were striving from an educational

standpoint, whether it was a business standpoint or whatever. Just having that interaction,

overall throughout those four years, which is a great impact.

Alton was able to notice the positiveness of Black males on campus as well:

> on campus to be around that many Black men, more confidence instead of watching what
> happens when you got beat down, because there were a lot of kids I went to school with
> that I knew were smart, they knew were smart, but they didn't get treated that way, and
> they didn't get those expectations, and then live down to those expectations. And I got to
> watch that. It didn't really trigger until I got to [my HBCU] and saw all these confident
> Black men.

Mike was able to recognize these differences and labeled them as a cultural shock. This cultural
shock helped Mike to improve their professionalism by being able to see more Black males in
positions of leadership. Mike stated:

> It allows you to see different, different shades of Blackness, different in knowing that
> even though you had people that look like you, and you see them in power positions. Just
> seeing people in higher positions, dressing nice or dressing differently than from back
> home in your neighborhood…Just showing that they're proud of who they are and where
> they come from. It's almost like a culture shock in itself. Sometimes seeing people, their
> demeanor and the mannerisms, and the way in which they carried themselves…For the
> most part, I felt it definitely taught me how to carry myself, how to be a professional,
> proper etiquette, things like that.

Eric also recognized the differences among those who attended an HBCU which helped them to
grow in their understanding of others:

> Although we were all at an HBCU, we didn't all come from the same demographic or
> background, right? Everybody didn't come from a broken home like I did. It was people
> that was there that came from a traditional household setting. It was people there that

were from another country, and they taught us about their culture. At bigger universities, it's harder for the [other] kids to be able to express their culture to the school. An HBCU [is] such a tight knit community, you really got to see a lot more than what you already knew and what you brought to the table. And I think that broadening my understanding of different cultures and backgrounds and where people come from, it just made me a little more accepting of not knowing a lot. So, I was constantly in a position of learning. I was learning about different things… when you get to a university and it is people that there from all different type of backgrounds, it kind of exposes you to all the thing you don't know…about your own culture.

Eric continued by acknowledging his own differences than those who were already on campus when he arrived and how he was able to self-reflect and change. Eric Stated:

Well, I was a lot different because I dressed different, and I sounded different, and I just walked around different…You just don't befriend people like that where I'm from. You know, you don't know what people are on. But over time, I loosened up and I realized, I don't have to carry it like that around here. But, I'm out here by myself. I didn't come with nobody. I don't have no friends for real, I just got the cats that are on the basketball team, but we just meeting each other too. So, I just came off as real standoffish for at least, I'd say, the first semester and half before I started opening up and letting down my guard and really kind of just enjoying the process of school. I was real standoffish.

While other participants stated they were not exposed to the diversity of the Black male until they enrolled into college. Philando stated he was used to this diversity and seeing other Black males in positions of leadership at a young age through the schools he was enrolled in. Philando stated:

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I think I was used to that. All throughout elementary school, for example, I went back and forth from private to public schools, but they were always majority Black. So, I saw affluent Black men and I saw those who were from lower socio-economic status. Middle school, I went to a pretty urban middle school where I had varied socio-economic backgrounds. High school, I went to a Catholic private high school so affluent, middle-class, upper-class and then from there I went to a public school that was majority Black with lower socio-economic status.

For Trayvon, this diversity of difference within Black males was geared more towards Black male masculinity as he stated, "[My HBCU] opened that up for me. [My HBCU] exposed me to a much more generous understanding of Black masculinity."

Understanding the differences among Black males helped to influence the identities of those who attended an HBCU. This "understanding of self" that many participants referred to help to provide opportunities for Black males to be who they want to be. This included the development of a professional identity for each participant.

Creation of an Authentic Professional Identity

Participants of this study discussed the development of a professional identity that was aided by their experiences at an HBCU. This professional identity was developed with an unexpected training the participants would go through during their time at an HBCU. Black males were able to develop their professional identity without having to focus on race. This allowed them to discover who they are while embracing their professional image. The participants were able to reflect on what it means to be a Black professional. This reflection fostered another subtheme that emerged which is code switching. Included in this section are the subthemes discovered through the data analysis, which are: 1) unexpected training; 2) removing

race from the process; 3) Knowing who you are; 4) embracing professionalism; 5) Black male professionals; and 6) code switching.

Unexpected Training

Attending an HBCU provided participants the opportunity to learn life lessons and receive unexpected training from the educators who provided their learning. Much of this training took place in the classroom in addition to their academic content. Oscar discussed how his professors provided his unexpected training in the classroom setting. Oscar stated:

> I had a few professors that would spend half the class talking about how much we needed
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> to take certain things seriously or how the world perceived us to be and how much of a
>
> threat that we were to society. And because of that, there would be certain narratives or
>
> certain perspectives about me as a Black man and stuff like that…At that moment I just
>
> realized how much more seriously I had to take all those opportunities in order to make
>
> sure my life from that point on was successful.

Oscar added how this unexpected training helped him to realize who he was and improve his confidence. Oscar stated:

> [I]t also allowed me to realize my worth. So, when I came out into society it wasn't a
>
> situation where I had to feel insecure about who I was and what I brought to the table,
>
> whether it was at my job or at any organizations outside or anything like that. It just made
>
> me a little bit more confident about who I was.

Oscar also discussed the accountability that is given to those who are enrolled at an HBCU and how that helps to prepare him for life after graduating. He continued:

> I think in the HBCU environment, particularly it's a lot of emphasis put on accountability
>
> and just making sure like 'Hey, like no one owes you anything, like you're responsible

for your own career, you're responsible for making sure that you meet your goals, making sure that you meet everything that you're trying to accomplish from a professional standpoint.' And I think a lot of my professors and a lot of leadership that I interacted with, they just held me accountable a lot on whether it was coming to class or not coming to class and things of that nature… I would definitely say my accountability was one of the major skill sets that I got.

John had a similar experience of building his confidence and being able to figure out who he was in order to build confidence. John explained:

[F]rom the terms of learning you know it is possible to do more, you can do more. You do have the abilities do more. But that's, to me, I think it's just the stage, it's like stages and I think it's a stage a step that I had to take to get to a certain level before I could really open my eyes to the struggle. I had to have a higher level of confidence and knew that there was, there is a network and a community that people that are out there who are, you know, in high positions that can help me and assist me and guide me through the fight or the struggle or whatever the case may be.

John discussed a specific course he was required to take that helped him in his training to become a Black male professional. John continued:

We actually have a professional development course… that we had to take and that was my first real introduction to the "faux pas" that occur that people aren't aware what we do in a professional setting… I will say having that course where actually really defined it explicitly about the whole notion that hey, there's a time and a place when you're being professional.

Alton discussed the expectations that were given to him while he was enrolled at his HBCU. These expectations helped to provide additional support beyond the classroom. Alton stated:

> [W]hile I was at the HBCU, I was living up to expectations that were attainable, but I had to fight for them. Once I left the HBCU, if I didn't watch myself, my only option I had was to live down to expectations. Because the same expectations did not exist outside of that school. You walked on that campus, you're going to do well, you're going to succeed, you're going to do better than you thought you could do, we got your back… you learn how to navigate in the real world, not just in the classroom. It makes a big difference.

Mike's unexpected training came in form of the support that was provided from others at his HBCU to help prepare him for life after college. Mike stated:

> I would say the main thing is the world teach you to make sure that you take care of yourself. Being on campus, I had the support you know, with the faculty members that you have and the friends that you make.

Trayvon agreed with Mike stating, "[My HBCU] prepared me to compete in White dominant environments." Trayvon went on to provide experiences that helped him to understand the influence his time at the university helped him to prepare for living in society after college:

> The mentorship of professors, the experiences to exercise the social justice ethos of the university through opportunities to travel to Louisiana when the Jena six situation was happening, cause that's been about 13 years ago now and that was formative as well. It was the precursor to the Black lives matters movement and being on the Vanguard of that was definitely influential.

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Philando explained how his experience prepared him for life after college and his transition into becoming a Black professional. Philando stated:

I think it armed me with the tools that I needed. Once I got out and I'm doing my thing, pursuing my identity. You can go out and know who you are. It cultivates a sense of self. It allows you go out into the world. I am able to code switch. Having social mobility, I can go in front of a class, or I can present at a conference and be perfectly fine or I can go to a step show and fit in there as well.

While Black males enrolled into the HBCU for education, they also received additional training on how to become a Black male professional. This training was not limited to a career development class, but was infused in the academics they received throughout their time at the HBCU. Being able to grow as a professional on campus was beneficial as they were able to develop their professional identity without having to worry about race.

Removing Race from the Process

Opportunities for Black males were not lacking at an HBCU. These opportunities allowed for Black males to compete with the rest of the campus for leadership positions or other endeavors without having to worry about race. Oscar compared how the campus life differed from society when it came to racial identity. Oscar stated:

I guess at HBCU, race didn't really play a manner. So, when opportunities came up or things were happening on campus, whether it was good or bad, we knew race didn't play a factor in the whole scenario. Whereas in society, it feels like that's always on my mind, whether or not did I get a job because I was Black, am I not getting a promotion on my job because I'm Black. So those types of things. And I will also say, considering I was afforded the opportunity to do several different internships and be within corporate

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America fairly early, I didn't experience a lot of racism in terms of like, being called a nigger or being stereotyped.

Eric also talked about the difference of being on campus and how Black males are viewed on campus versus how Black males are viewed in the community. Eric explained:

On campus, you have this notion of where, you're going places and you're about to do major things. Well when you leave campus immediately and go back out in to the community, you still get that similar look to anybody else that's your age that's your complexion out in that society and they can't look at you and tell that you go to an HBCU, you're on your way to doing something major with your life. [T]hey just see another Black kid another Black man and as much as we knew we were doing something great, when we went out into the community they looked down on us and they still had that same snide look at us, even though they know we're college students.

Eric continued explaining how removing race helped him to grow while he was enrolled at an HBCU. This learning included that, even though you are viewed as Black in society, acting a certain way is what makes you different in the community. Eric stated:

Yeah absolutely because it was me understanding that regardless of if my skin tone is the same so, that automatically is going to get you treated a certain way. But it's what you know and how you handle situations that they realize you're different. So you have to have that type of patience where you can carry yourself in a type of manner where you can snap people out of that instant prejudgment of who you are and what you are.

Alton also discusses how it was easy for him to become comfortable on his campus as race was not a factor. Alton explained the only competition you have on an HBCU campus is proving to yourself you can do something. Alton said:

Being a Black man on campus was a hell of a lot, still is, a hell of a lot more comfortable. And that helps with your confidence level with everything else that you do. That helps with learning how to navigate outside of the university…you don't have anything to prove to anybody. Except maybe, you always have much more to prove to yourself. I'm not good enough to do this. I have the ability to do that. But, no harm, no foul if you don't get there within society, being on campus.

Alton also talks about the ability of being supported and being surrounded by "just us" that allowed them to grow professionally:

It gave us the opportunity to grow and we got supported in doing it…. At the same time, you're surrounded by professors and adults who are supporting you to make sure that that persona is not your reality. And, well we always said, like get up how we were in school, but we grew up…Like I said, it made it easier for me because on a regular basis, we learned how that socialization worked outside of campus. Because we had professors on campus that not only, they didn't spend all their time teaching us what to think...being surrounded by basically just us. We had some teachers, but the teachers were the same way. Black, White, and everything else in between, were pushing to make sure that we understood how to operate in the world.

Alton also explained how he believes others are a product of their environment:

I'll look at some of the kids here that have gone to school, and that identity tends to slip. Depending on where they are, because they tend to just assimilate, they just fall right in line with what everything else. So unless you're put in some kind of situation where you have that support to be yourself, basically you're going to fall in whatever you're in.

Mike also stated he was comfortable while enrolled at their HBCU stating, "But being Black male on campus kind of gives you a different comfortability, compared to the other universities." And Trayvon felt he was appreciated fully at an HBCU, stating:

I had an incredible experience at [my HBCU]. It was an experience where my fullness as an individual was honored. I did not feel...chastised because of my race or because of the fact that I was a Black male.

Philando described how it felt to be in an environment that felt more like family, being able to let your guard down and fully embracing the experience. He explained:

Socially, it's a easy transition. It's a family-oriented atmosphere. If you could think of a cookout meets college or family reunion meets high school. That's what an HBCU is like. So, socially it's easy and that's one of the things that I say is an asset. You don't have to worry about trying to fit in. You don't have to worry about how you're being perceived. You don't have to worry about whose stereotyping you. You can go there and you're around like-minds. You're around people you can relate to. Socially, it's an easy transition…you're able to kind of let your guard down as far as that goes and embrace the positives of your culture. At the same time, none the negative aspects of it are magnified, so you embrace the good things and the bad parts of it or not the bad parts, but the behaviors, learned behaviors that are prevalent in our culture that are not beneficial to furthering the plight of African Americans.

When asked about Black male privilege at an HBCU, John explains how he never really thought about Black males having privilege but explains the possibility of being able to grow racially and learn more about who you are as a person. John talks about how this growth helps with assimilation into Western Society. John stated:

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I really never really thought about privileges. It was just that I was comfortable there and

I knew that if I wanted to be something on campus, I can be, if I wanted to do something

on campus, I could do it. So well I guess I did answer it. Yeah. I guess I did have certain

privileges, but I never thought of it in that sense though. I just always felt like, this is

what you're supposed to have, which is like just mentioned, Black male privilege…the

thing about the HBCU, it's good and it's bad because it kind of helps you to…assimilate

to what the society really is. But on the flip side of it, it also assists you with, If you go

down the right path and you seek out the information at HBCU, it really helps you to

have knowledge self as an African person or a Black person or African American,

whatever want to call yourself, you know, if you really go down that path there. But it

also helps to assimilate into to the European society in Western society.

This growth and knowledge of self was another subtheme that emerged in the data. Being able to

figure out who you are and what your place was in society. In the next section, I discuss how

participants were able to learn who they were while enrolled in an HBCU.

Know Who You Are

Knowledge of self and knowing who you are was a common theme among all

participants. Participants stated they were able to figure out who they were and grow into the

professional they felt they should be. For Oscar, becoming a confident Black male in the

corporate setting was derived from attending an HBCU. Oscar explained:

I work in corporate America and I think one of the things that I continually find is that,

there's still that, even though I'm confident in who I am and confident about my abilities

and skills and this that and the third, I still feel like there's some, because I am Black,

there is some hesitation to act a certain way or present myself in a certain way because

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I'm Black…Because I'd definitely say, although I am confident in who I am, I do find

myself being a little bit more reserved than my counterparts because of those types of

narrative that I've seen some other Black males face, whether it's on my job or just out in

society and period… I guess for me, I'm back on look at myself, I was to say like number

one, like being confident, being, you know as they call them, they're not arrogant, but

they're being confident in who you are and the skill set and what you bring to the table.

Similar to Oscar, Trayvon also developed confidence in being a Black professional which

allowed him to be himself no matter the situation. Trayvon stated:

Being at [my HBCU] just created within me a confidence to authentically be a Black man

wherever I find myself. So, I've never walked into a room and felt like I had to be more

White, or I had to code switch, or I had to manipulate myself presentation to be more

palatable to White people.

Trayvon also talked about the challenges he faced with the confidence he has and the

expectations from others regarding how he presented himself:

Over and over again, up until this point, I've been challenged about the way that I speak,

and that's too heavy a burden to bear for me, to manipulate myself depending on who is

in the room and at what table. I try to always exude excellence. I try to be eloquent when

I speak. I try to be mindful of my surroundings and do that which I believe is right…I

learned to exude and to strive for excellence at all times, and I think that has served me

well, regardless of what room I walk into. I did earn my bachelor's from an HBCU, but

my master's degree and my doctoral work were both done in White, higher education

environments, and I think what I learned at [my HBCU] was if you are excellent, if you

always strive to be the best, you will compete well in any room that you walk into.

Mike explained how when you are out in the community, it is important to understand

that you are representing more than just yourself. Mike explained:

> The main thing I would say is always knowing who you are and knowing that you
>
> represent more than just yourself. You know, professors used to always say, you never
>
> know who's watching. You don't do anything that your parents or grandparents wouldn't
>
> approve of. So, keeping in the back of your mind, you know that you'd be quiet as a
>
> church mouse at work, when you get out of work, you'd be a crazy man. So, if you just
>
> hold yourself accordingly at all times, you don't have to worry about doing anything that
>
> would disrespect who you are and who you represent.

Philando's knowledge of self started prior to enrolling in school. Once entering school, his

knowledge of self transitioned with the understanding that you do not have to fit in with every

crowd. He noted there are times when it is okay to be different and knowing who you are is a

learning process:

> You come there with a obvious sense of self. It was a process of wanting to be part of the
>
> A-crowd, wanting to fit in, wanting to do things that, not that were bad, but were
>
> stereotypical of what I thought people wanted from a Black man, if that makes sense.
>
> Whether it be other Black men, whether it be girls, whatever. Going from trying to fit in
>
> to wanting to standout was a big process for me. It came with trials, tribulations,
>
> knocking my head, all these kinds of things.

Eric understood his presence is recognized as soon as he enters the room. This negative

prejudgment when people first see him is dismissed once he begins talking. He gave credit to

attending an HBCU to help him be able to navigate different arenas:

Yeah, I'm a big Black man, scary Black man. Three or four sentences into a

conversation, you know who you talking to. You know you talking to somebody who has

some professionalism to them, understands a lot more than what's going on and being at

an HBCU and seeing a difference of going from one arena to the next, it allowed me to

be able to navigate a little differently.

Participants placed an emphasis on discovering who they were while they were enrolled

at an HBCU. This discovery helped them to enhance their identity as a Black male and begin to

embrace the expectation of professionalism that was expected of them as they attended an

HBCU.

Embracing Professionalism

Becoming a professional was a common subtheme among the participants of this study.

When I asked the participants how they were able to separate their professional identity from

their personal identity, participants stated they did not feel they needed to separate these

identities. Participants attributed this need to not separate their identities to their enrollment at an

HBCU. Oscar discussed how his professional and personal identities were intertwined, stating:

I think a lot of my professional identity [and] personalized identity are kind of

intertwined and linked that I don't think they had to teach me too much about each of my

identities because like I said, I think they both were already like intertwined.

Similar to Oscar, Alton recalled an analogy that was given to him by one of his professors

encouraging students not to become a product of their environment but to embrace who they are:

Actually, one of my professors explained it to us the best way he could go, and he talked

to us about fish, talking about everybody eating catfish. First when we were at lunch, he

said, "Why are you putting salt on that fish?", because it needed to be seasoned, it ain't

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right. But the fish is swimming their whole life in the saltwater. And then he flipped it on

us as far as realizing that you can swim, you can be wherever you are, without wherever

you are becoming you. Just like fish can swim in salty water, and still come out of that

water and still be fish and not salt. We can do the same thing. We can go into any

environment, be ourselves, and come back out.

John talked about professionalism being a language that is used in America. John

identified this as a cross cultural language and is not limited to one particular group. John stated:

Professionalism is the universal law in America and is spoken the same way no matter

the culture. So, I learned how to be more professional when I was in college, So my

interaction with White people or Caucasians is a lot easier because I knew how to speak

the language of being professional.

While John states he was able to speak the language of professionalism, he acknowledged in a

later interview that embracing professionalism has to come with the understanding that being a

professional is not acting White. John explained:

I think we really have to get away from that, situate that, that misnomer of, you know,

being professional, being intelligent, being articulate is acting White. Because when we

came over here, you know, we were taught by the, the most, the ignorant, the most,

unintelligent, you know, we were taught by poor Whites. We were taught, bastardized,

English by uneducated, poor Whites. So, you know, I mean, we, I don't know, you know,

being articulate has nothing to do with being White or whatever the case may be or being

intelligent, you know, has nothing to do with being White.

Trayvon talked about embracing his professionalism without limiting his Blackness or masculinity. Going into any room and being his authentic self was how Trayvon explained he was able to embrace their professionalism as a Black male, stating:

> To be the model professional wherever, I might be, but I don't know that there's anything wrong with my Blackness, and further than that, I don't think there's anything wrong with my masculinity… and if you're offended by that, if you're offended about the tone of my voice or by the rate at which I throw words around, then that's a problem that you have to sit with. But I did not learn to take that burden on, and I have not felt the need to take that burden on since I left the campus.

Participants understood their professional identity was not something they needed to change in order to make others feel more comfortable. Embracing this part of their identity allowed them to develop more confidence in who they are as a Black male.

Black Male Professional

During my first round of interviews, I felt it was important to ask each participant what it meant to be a Black male. A common theme amongst the participants was to be professional. In order to gain clarification, I followed up in the second round of interviews and asked the participants to describe what they would consider to be a professional Black male. Alton shared his thoughts on Black male professionalism where he stated:

> When you said that, I was about to answer the way you asked the first way, and I still will, with professionalism, with that sense of pride, with that knowledge of self. Because if you don't know who you are, anybody can tell you who to be. And that's not a good thing in any case. If you don't know who you are, even if you can't put it in words, if you

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don't know who you are, somebody else is going to tell you who you are, and they're

usually wrong.

Alton went on to explain how he handled being a Black male professional in the workplace:

I roam around, sometimes I honestly don't worry about it, because there are moments for

me where it honestly, it just doesn't matter. You are being in that environment. You learn

how to just be and realize there's really no real difference. You just are who you are, and

you accept that. So, different people around you can't accept it, basically you're around

the wrong people.

Trayvon's point of view towards the Black male professional is to transform the idea of

what a professional looks like in the eyes of others by providing swag into his professionalism.

Trayvon stated:

To be a Black male professional is to not simply be at the top of my game, not simply to

be sharp intellectually, not simply to press the boundaries of my field and try to expand it,

but to bring some class to it, to bring some swag to it, to bring an edge of aristocracy, if

you will, to it. Yeah, and I think that's always what makes Blackness, kind of sets

Blackness apart, because Black folk are not just professional, but they infuse some swag

into their professionalism.

This swag that Trayvon communicates is to help Black males to stay on top of their game. Tamir

talked about the importance of Black males to work harder than their counterparts when they are

in the professional realm to stay on top of their game:

I hear that they say you have to be twice as good now. Now, I think you have to be three

times as good. You understand. It's understood that you are not going to be playing on

the same level. But with knowing that, with knowing that, you still have to be able to be

best you can be.

Eric also believed there needs to be a level of swag for Black male professionals. He noted Black

males need to be respectful and able to grab attention and when they walk into a room with this

attention should be positive in nature. He also noted Black males have to be ready to be the only

Black male in the room and prepared to share their response about how something will impact

the Black male culture as a whole. Eric stated:

> Respectful, first and foremost. And your posture needs to be positive. When you're in a
>
> room, you should be having a positive impact on any room. I think being a Black male,
>
> people are curious when they're in your presence, and you have to establish a tone and go
>
> from there. So, you always need to be the positive impact in a room and stay away from
>
> perpetuating stereotypes that some people have about Black males…Some people can go
>
> into a room and just fade and blend into the room and not say anything, and that's okay.
>
> But as a Black man in a room it's usually going to come to a time where it's, "Well, what
>
> do you think?" And you have to be ready for those moments.

Mike's perspective on a Black male professional also included being respectful. The form

of respect Mike gave is to understand there is a place and time for everything and to know when,

where, and how a Black male professional should operate in different environments:

> Basically manners. They are respectful, respecting other people's space, respecting their
>
> environment that you meet in. Knowing your surroundings, being careful that you know
>
> you're not talking behind someone's back. Knowing that not everyone is to be trusted.
>
> Keeping your opinions, as your opinions. So not everybody needs to know your opinion
>
> at all times but also knowing when to stand up for yourself. Another skill was knowing

when to lead and when to follow. Being able to take charge when duty calls. The most

important thing is being able to know how to conduct yourself as a professional.

Mike was able to sum up his response on how a Black male carries themselves:

A Black male professional carries himself: one who with respect and dignity, knowing

that you always represent more than just yourself. If you got a shot, knowing that

sometimes that may be the only impression that the outside world has of a Black male.

So, you must carry yourself accordingly at all times, especially in the professional setting.

Philando's take on professionalism is that it is something that a Black male is not able to

turn off. Not because it is infused in them, but due to always being watched and being judge.

Philando provided an example about dress down day and how Black males still have to bring

professionalism to dress down day:

They have to be professional even when environments and times where it's supposed to

be relaxed, right? So, on a dress down day, for example, like on a really basic level. A

dress down day, you can't be as comfortable as perhaps your non-minority counterparts,

right? Because your level of professionalism has to always be that much more nimble….

I think it's understanding that there's almost a hyper sense of professionalism and not just

in dress, but in terms of how you address people, how you present your work, how you

do your work.

Philando elaborated that a Black male professional has a duty to help others once they

feel they have the knowledge to help improve the lives of other Black males, while also voicing

concerns that affects the community the Black male is connected to is important at this level. He

added Black male professionals must use their influence to help others who have not made it as

far as them, and this comes with the understanding that a Black male professional is a representation of their community. Philando continued:

> Once you get to a certain level of professionalism and you have a platform, it's being cognizant and aware of that platform and influence you have. So, when you have that platform and you have space to affect change in that basic space, meaning you can't lose your job because of it. Being able to utilize that. So being cognizant and aware of your space in that environment, in that group, in that job, in the occupation whatever it is. And building up to get a platform to get influence, to get power, to be able to affect change; whether that's to bring on more minorities; whether that's to bring and voice the concerns that affect your community; whether that's helping to educate other minorities. Or whatever that plight may be. Understanding that whole dynamic…And then I think it's being... Understanding that you're a representation of the larger population. A lot of times non minorities are able to only represent themselves when there's someone. With being a young, Black professional, a minority professional. Yeah, you are your individual self, but you're also a representation of the larger community. Understanding that magnitude and that weight that you carry along with you. And then there's actually knowing your stuff. You can't let your guard down. You can't slack. You have to always, bring your top game.

Participants noted being a Black male professional requires one to operate at a higher level. Respect was a quality participants acknowledged as important for a Black male professional to possess. Competing against stereotypes consciously and unconsciously and working at a higher level than their counterparts was a requirement for Black male professionals as articulated by the participants. Participants were able to articulate their viewpoint of a Black

male professional based on the leadership they saw and what they learned while enrolled in an HBCU.

Code Switching

While discussing the Black male professional during the first round of interviews, the term code switching was brought up by several participants. In the second round of interviews, participants were asked to describe what code switching meant to them and how they were able to manage code switching in the professional arena. Since the participants were able to develop their professional identity without having to think about race, participants did not feel code switching was connected to trying to change one's race identity but being able to adapt to situations. John described code switching as being able to adjust when in a professional arena:

Well for me, code switching is just basically being able to just work in a professional

arena and speak professionally in that specific arena. To me, I don't call it talking White.

I don't call it talking Black. It's just being able to communicate a specific way in a

specific setting. The same way that I'm going to speak with my family and my friends is

not how I'll talk when I'm in a professional setting.

When asked how he was able to manage code switching, John replied:

It kind of comes natural. I've always worked in a position of sales and I know that I was

always, even at a young age in high school, I was always aware of the fact that there's a

time and a place…So managing it hasn't been an issue because I'm rooted in who I am

and I know who I am as a person in existence of a being on this earth period. So,

switching up for the whole sake of there's a time and a place for certain things, just never

dawned on me. It just always came natural…I feel like Black men, most Black men, we

have to overcompensate at times in the arena of being a professional. So, when we code

switch, we kind of code switch hard and some guys are aware of it and some aren't.

…But I feel like Black males, when they code switch, they have to code switch hard and

overcompensate just a little bit because in the back of our minds there's always a notion

like are they looking at me as just another nigga or they probably think that I'm

uneducated or unprofessional. So, I have to prove it on a higher level.

Oscar's response was similar to John's being code switching occurs depending on what

environment he was in. Oscar stated:

I guess with me it's more so, I guess playing the part, if you need to play in order to, in

order to be successful. Like I just think in certain arenas you can be yourself and, and

other instances you have to kind of change who you are as a person just to fit in…So I

definitely would, define that as adapting to your environment and just having certain

behavior that's more acceptable than how you would probably be with a family member

or a friend or something like that, but just you know exactly who you are to the, to the

current environment or situation.

When asked how he was able to manage code switching in the professional arena, Oscar did not

feel he had to change who he was to fit their environment. Oscar stated:

I think for me just my make-up is just similar to how we need to be, like I don't think

I've changed the way I talk or anything like that it is just, I just have been fortunate

enough to be in an environment where I could be myself and it's not that much of a

difference.

Mike described code switching as being an imposter and changing who you are as a

person to fit your environment, stating:

Basically, being an imposter. Knowing that, changing your voice, changing the way you

actually dress. You may have to wear clothes that you may not necessarily feel

comfortable in, changing your demeanor, dialect or dialogue from the way you talk, your

language, the way you talk from when you're talking with your friends compared to

when you talk to a colleague.

Even though Mike recognized code switching and defined what it meant to them, he explained

he does not code switch anymore as he is content with who he is as a person. Mike continued:

I just feel that, as far as code switching, for the clothes that I wear, things like that. I still

got the same type of style at work and outside of work, you may laugh, giggle, at jokes

that you may not necessarily get the reference to. To me, in the beginning I feel like code

switching was prevalent. But now, once you get a little bit more comfortable where you

are, you just feel that, I don't think I would do as much code switching. I'd just be who I

am, and it's got to take me for who I am.

Tamir saw code switching as a means of survival, and he stated, "I guess because it's just

the way of life. That's how you have to survive… In business, you got to talk like they talk.

When you're around your people, you talk how you normally talk." Trayvon also saw code

switching as a manipulation of self to please the White society. He explained, "Code switching is

when you manipulate your self-presentation, when you manipulate the way you speak, or even

some of your social cues in order to be more palatable to White dominant society." When asked

how he was able to manage code switching in the professional arena, Trayvon stated:

I don't necessarily try to code switch. Being the pastor of a large African American

church, I don't necessarily have the need to code switch in the environment of my

vocation. As it relates to some community work that I do, I don't attempt to code switch

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in those environments either, because I think those places are well served to hear an authentic Black perspective and an authentic life voice. So, I don't, I never make an attempt to code switch.

The authenticity of who he is was important to Trayvon. Eric also looked at code switching from their current profession lens. Eric stated:

For me it's understanding young people's terminology. You have to be a student of culture and understand what the kids, how kids speak, and then you have to know how to speak professionally in your realm. Understanding your profession and being able to express it in different manner. So, you have basically your "off work" persona, and then you have your "on work, your at the job" persona. And depending on who you're talking to depends on how far that scale slides to the left and to the right. It's just being able to converse with people on the level or at the level that they're at, not necessarily talking over people here, but definitely not talking under, or speaking slang in a professional setting. So, I think that's code-switching, just going from one type of cultural diction to another…You have to be able to speak at the level of the person you're talking to or above what they're used to. It's a necessity, meaning professionalism. It's a necessity.

Eric believed code switching is one of the most important skill a Black male must develop:

Code-switching? I think it may be the most important skill that you have to develop as a Black man…Because to reach the young Black kids, the young Black students, male and female, you have to be able to speak to them on their level. And at the same time when you step into the arena with your higher ups and the professionals, you have to be able to speak that language as well…that helped me along the way in the professional realm, just making sure that my conversation was broader than the neighborhood and being able to

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put in myself in those arenas where I've been uncomfortable and pretty much survive and

just learned as I went along.

Code switching is described to be an important asset to a professional Black male. Being

able to conduct themselves accordingly allows the Black male professional to be able to operate

effectively in any arena. Since race was not included as the participants in this study began to

develop their identity at an HBCU, they were able to develop code switching naturally that did

not require them to think about the racial makeup of the setting they were in.

Progression Through Cross's Black Identity Theory

During the first interview, participants were asked to evaluate where they stood in the

stages of Cross's (1991) Black identity development. Participants were given an explanation of

Cross's theory and the stages of development within his theory (see Appendix G). Cross's theory

consisted of four stages: 1) pre-encounter, 2) encounter, 3) immersion/emersion, and 4)

internalization/commitment. During the pre-encounter stage, Blacks are not exposed to race and

race does not have an impact on their life. The encounter stage is when Blacks recognize there is

something different about them and the way they are treated because of their race. This typically

is discovered through an oppressive event. In the immersion/emersion stage, Blacks discover

more about their racial identity and how they have been oppressed. This stage comes with anger

towards the White culture along with the desire to surround themselves with Blackness. During

the final stage of internalization/commitment, Blacks develop the desire to advance the Black

community. This stage also reduces the anger Blacks have towards the White community to the

point that they are capable of developing meaningful relationships with Whites. Participants

reviewed this information with me to allow for an opportunity to clarify any questions they may

have about the theory. Upon completion of the of the overview of the theory, participants were

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asked to evaluate what stage of Black identity they were at prior to enrolling into their HBCU, after graduating from their HBCU, and their current stage.

The purpose of this question was to evaluate whether or not each participant progressed through the stages of Black identity development as articulated by Cross (1991). For seven out of eight participants, there was progression through the stages of Black identity development. Each participant who progressed through the stages of identity development through their enrollment at an HBCU also acknowledged their current stage being the commitment stage of Cross's Black identity development theory. Only one participant did not progress throughout their enrollment in college, but the stage they started at was higher than the other participants. Trayvon, who did not progress through his Black identity in college, attributed this lack of progression to his anger towards the White culture. Trayvon stated:

> It was never an issue of being insecure in Black identity, but I don't know that I quite got to the place of not having anger towards White culture with the ability to develop meaningful relationships. Because so often with White culture they are unable to see the damage that they cause individually and collectively. And that is a battle that continues to iterate.

Trayvon stated after graduation he was at the Immersion/Emersion stage of Cross's Black identity development and is still struggling to move past that stage. Eric stated, "I grew up a lot and I grew up quick" when he thought about their progression of Black identity in college. Eric explained his current stage of Internalization/Commitment stage as he feels it is their duty to give back to the Black community:

> I'm at the commitment stage, definitely at the commitment stage. I'm committed to enriching the next community, the next generation of males and preparing them to go out

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into this world. I thought for a long time I was doing it on a college level when I was

doing my advising and counseling at [my previous job], but I was having conversations

with college kids that they really should have had before they started amassing debt. We

all acknowledge the fact that kids are different these days. Well a lot of kids were in

college that definitely didn't need to be there. And our generation you go there, you find

yourself, like how I found myself. You figure it out there.

Philando also discussed his Black identity being at the internalization stage, stating:

After I graduated, I think I was more like internalization. I think where now I know

what's going on. I've read about it, I've researched it, I can see it clearer. It's just a

perspective and I want to effect change. I think that's where I was at after graduation.

Pushing to reform, leading the way, having the change for racism, inequality, oppression,

social injustice, mass incarceration, all those things.

John felt his purpose is to help the Black community advance John explained:

Without a doubt, with the internalization and commitment that that's my purpose in life.

Like real talk. That's my purpose on why I'm here…late after graduating with my

masters, I was, I was fully committed to working at an HBCU. So that would be the

beginning of the internalization commitment part because I didn't want to work anyone

else. I wanted to work at a historically Black college university.

Mike stated he was at the internalization/commitment stage as he had been able to handle issues

he encountered with the White culture tactfully. Mike stated:

I would say in between the immersion stage and committed stage. Just for the simple fact

that I always embrace my Blackness. Never really had hatred for the White culture, but at

that point in time still wasn't secure enough to address certain issues, which that

obviously developed a little bit later in life. Being able to address those issues tactfully, I

should say.

While every participant did not start at the same stage, each participant was at the

immersion/emersion stage or higher and contributed their growth through their Black identity

development to attending an HBCU. At this stage, each participant discussed how they felt it was

important to give back to the next generation of Black males. This called for the Black males to

transition into a Black male role model.

Transition into a Black Male Role Model

Participants reported the transition to a Black male role model actually began while being

enrolled at an HBCU. This enrollment allows participants to be exposed to role models on

campus that provides an impression of what a role model looks like. From their exposure to role

models on campus, participants were able to discuss what qualities are needed for Black males to

be a role model as well as what lessons need to be taught to the next generation of Black males.

This section expands on the exposure of role models on the HBCU campus, what qualities Black

male role models should have, and lessons the participants feel should be taught to the next

generation of Black males.

Exposure to Role Models on Campus

During their initial interview, participants were asked who on campus had the greatest

impact on their identity development while they were enrolled at an HBCU. Each participant was

able to identify someone who has had an impact and served as a role model when they were

enrolled. Role models varied from the president of the institution to secretaries. Oscar recalled

his relationship with the President and Vice President of his school, stating:

I actually had a very strong relationship with the President of my school at the time and also the vice president and then a lot of their support team, I had a very strong relationship with. In fact, I would say my sophomore year, the vice president of the school actually paid for my education…I found most of the people that I had the strongest relationships with were female professors as opposed to Black male professors. Whereas, I think it would have been good at that point in time in my life to have some strong Black male presence to kind of help and shape my environment as I was growing and developing. I'd definitely say it was an administrator on campus who definitely was kind of like my mother on campus or whatever. I would say she had the greatest impact in terms of like, she was the one who helped me find my first internship.

Oscar's role models identified as female, but he stated they still had an impact on his Black male identity development. This was the same for Alton who had a Black female that helped him during college, but Alton was also privileged to also have a Black male role model. Alton stated:

There were two. One was actually one of the secretaries in the main office that always watched out for all of us. Everybody knew her. She took care of us, she watched out, and matter of fact, my last year when I graduated, I came up short on paying the last of my tuition, and they were holding as far as me graduating. And she paid it. And then got mad at me when I tried to pay her back. She said "That's your graduation present for you. You go ahead and do what you got to do." So, having that kind of support made a difference. And then also, another who was, again, dealing with the money issues, but my chair in the music department. As much as we butted heads, and as many problems as we had between each other, he also always had my back. And that made a difference.

Mike also had a Black female who he considered had an influence on his identity development. He stated, "Well I had one of my professors, she was like our mentor and like our mom away from home. She pretty much took good care of us because we spent a lot of time with her." While this was a role model for Mike, he also explained there were more people on campus he viewed as a role model:

> Pretty much all of the, from the president, president of student affairs, and stuff like that, we all knew by first name…On campus, I would definitely say my professor and mentor, my baseball coach, my older fraternity brothers, as well as some of the older students that was ahead of me, upperclassmen, far as being on campus.

Trayvon also recognized a Black female as his role model while he was in college:

> I was fascinated by the president's leadership during that time. She came after a storied career as a politician. She worked in the [names former U.S. president] administration and then lived just a really fabulous life. [She had a] storied career, and in her retirement years, came to lead the school. So, to see her in action to observe her leadership prowess was formative and very influential.

For Eric, it was a childhood coach he gave credit to be his role model. This coach was the reason he attended an HBCU and he felt they were the most influential Black male outside of his family. Eric stated:

> I'm going to have say my childhood coach. He had, outside of my father, because my father I always idolized my father, but outside of my father, that is the most influential Black male that has ever been in my life.

> While it is common for the role models to be someone in a position of leadership or

authority, Philando saw role models in his peers:

Definitely. A fraternity….That was a good part of maturing me I would say. That was the

first time I really had older men in my environment. In high school and in my

neighborhood we were always the same age. The majority of us had problems so were

not learning from each other, it wasn't really someone older to look up to. That was the

first time, I really had somebody to look up to and direct me in the right direction so that

was a good experience.

Tamir was one of several participants who participated in sports while in college. This developed his relationship with his role models. Tamir stated:

the athletic directors and coaches. That's about all I, I mean I'll get, there would be one

guy that was, I could say was a mentor there, former basketball coach, and he was, what

would he call it? The athletics of activities and the athletic director for campus activities

or whatever, campus athletic. So, I mean, yeah, that's one guy.

It is important to recognize that the role models' participants identified were both male and female and worked in various capacities at their universities. For participants, it was not necessarily the position of the role model, but what information they could gain from the role model. These relationships helped to shape the transition into a role model for participants.

Qualities of the Black Male Role Model

At their current points in life, all the participants recognized their positions as role models for the next generation. Given this status, participants were able to identify what they felt were important qualities in being a Black male role model. Trayvon explained having the connection to history as an important quality for Black male role models stated:

I think a connection with history, I think a commitment to the way that our ancestors

have come, and understanding that who we are and what we do, no matter the arena, it is

a continuation of the seeds that they have sewn and what they've already planted, and we

never can afford to lose sight of that. We never can afford to think that we have arrived.

Oscar agreed that there is a generational lens that needs to be looked through when serving as a

Black male role model. Understanding this history is important as generations have different

struggles that they must address. Oscar explained:

Being self-aware of everything that's about you. And then also being open minded and

welcoming of the new ideas, not only from other cultures but up the generation because

they can't look through the generational lens that I'm looking at through and it's going to

be different…Even with the generation that's younger than me, things aren't as tough as

they were for a Black man as it is today. Just like it's my time coming up wasn't as tough

as my parents' situation coming up as Black people.

Understanding who you are is also a quality Mike saw as being important in addition to

transparency, honesty, and respect. Mike stated, "I'll say one of transparency, honesty and

respect. One of Black pride, first and foremost, one who represents self-will, but one of caring."

For Eric, having patience and understanding were qualities he felt were important when working

with the younger generation of Black males:

Patience and understanding. I understand the teen that people are saying are out of

control. I understand the teen that they're saying where you're going to be a criminal

your whole life. And as a athlete and becoming a athlete, after being labeled such, I know

the athletic side of it where people... The kids that people see promise in and see benefit

in. So, I have that understanding of all sides of the coin. And so whatever that young

person needs, whatever kind of guidance that young person needs, I'm qualified to give it

to them.

These qualities were derived from the experiences participants had with their own role models and also their current status of serving as role models. As they served as role models, they were able to connect with others through using the qualities they have identified. This helped participants to identify lessons that should be taught to the next generation of Black males.

Lessons for the Next Generation of Black Males

After hearing the stories from Black males about their transition into becoming a role model, I thought it would be important to hear what lessons the next generation of Black males needed to know as they grew in their Black male identity. One of the common lessons to be taught was about history. Alton talked about the importance of improving the knowledge of history, but also understanding there is no such thing as being a carbon copy and to continue to develop into the person you are meant to be:

> The knowledge and acknowledgement of my history and of our history… So it's a matter of teaching the next generation, this is what happened, this is what can happen and get them to understand it, teach them to learn from our mistakes and there's certain things you just don't want to find out for yourself…The only other thing really is to try, there's no carbon copy way to do it. It's just find out who you are, what is it you want to do? So that you might say, I want to be like somebody, but realize you can't be that somebody else. Then you've got kids, "I want to be like Lebron", "I want to be like Michael", that's fine. But what is it about that person that you like? And that's what you're strive for. Cause you look characteristics, you're not trying to be a carbon copy.

Trayvon also felt history, specifically Black history, is important to teach to the next generation of Black males. Trayvon also added the need to learn about dignity as well:

I think history, I think, and not just White history, but Black history. History helps you

interpret the present in a more robust way. I think it's important to teach the importance

of the elements of dignity, and when I talk about the elements of dignity, I'm talking

about the performance of elements of dignity. So Black men especially, and Black people

in particular, have held onto dignity in the face of unrelenting disregard.

Tamir felt it is a responsibility to guide the next generation "into the ancestors" who came before us in order to help continue their legacy. He explained:

We have a responsibility first to guide them into our ancestors…we not here because of

what, anything we'd done. It's all because those who came before us and we have to

carry on that legacy.

Eric felt it is important for Black males to learn how to be responsible for both themselves and the community. Eric discussed how conversations are had with Black females about the importance of going to college and getting an education, Eric felt these conversations should also be had with young Black males:

I think we have to teach them the quality...We really need to focus on teaching teenagers,

young men, how to be men, how to be responsible for themselves, responsible for their

family, responsible for their community…We have to teach these young men how to be

men and what men do. Be responsible. Be the rock of the family. Be the rock of the

community. We push education on young women like, "It's no doubt." We thought "Yo,

you have to go to college as a young woman. That's how you hit it." But we don't have

that same conversation for young Black males.

Mike agreed with Eric that Black males need to learn how to be responsible for themselves and then learn how to pay forward the lessons they have learned:

The lessons that need to be taught, is a lot. First and foremost, always represent yourself

accordingly. Never be afraid of showing who you are. Always be tactful, endure

endeavors, think before you act, you got two ears and one mouth, so listen twice before

you speak. Once you get to a certain place, always find a way to pay it forward. Be a

teacher, not a giver. And what I mean by that, meaning that if you know something, teach

it, you just don't give it away. Because if you teach it, it can be taught to multiple people,

but if you just give it away, you only help that person just that one time or that person can

use that knowledge to continue to feed their family for a lifetime.

John spoke on the importance of Black males knowing how society views them and being

able to be accepting of the ideas presented to them from the generations that come before them.

He stated, "First off, how they see their selves and then being aware of how society currently

views their selves, but also being open minded to the ideas of the older generation and what

we're trying to communicate and come across." Philando also felt knowing how images can

impact you as a Black male is also important:

I think we need to be taught the understanding of images, representation and who holds

the power and how to decipher and discern media. And the reason I say that is, again,

they're force-fed images on TV. They're force-fed images on social media. They're

force-fed ideas through music. So, all these different things that you can't decipher,

understand, that these images are controlled, not by us, but by the majority.

Oscar talked about the need for the next generation to understand how to work hard. He

noted while there are limited opportunities available, when a Black male is given the

opportunity, they should not take it for granted:

I would definitely say like nothing is, given to you. Definitely have to work hard for it,

now as opportunities are given to you, I mean I would definitely say they have to learn

how to cherish it and not take it for granted because there aren't a lot of opportunities out

here. And so when we are put in that position to, whether it's progressing in our careers

or education or whatever it is, is don't take those things for granted. So I definitely say

that a big message to today's youth, because I definitely feel like today everybody thinks,

something's owed to them and don't have to work for it just by, just looking at the social

media culture whereas you can be famous today just by posting a video and people think

that's you know how life works in terms of like instant gratification.

Participants did not attain the lessons they felt needed to be delivered to the next

generation until they enrolled in an HBCU. For some participants, this information was given to

them, and for others, they had to figure this information out on their own. Regardless of how

they received the information, all participants felt it was necessary to pass it along through their

positions of being role models to the next generation.

Theory of Black Male Identity Development at HBCUs

Once the data collection was complete and the major themes were analyzed, I was able to

develop a theory for Black male identity development for those who attended an HBCU. The

following phases explain the grounded theory of Black male identity development at HBCUs: 1)

acknowledgement of Black male identity; 2) understanding all Black males are not the same; 3)

creation of professional identity; and 4) transition into Black male role model. Phase one occurs

prior to the enrollment into an HBCU and is the foundation phase for the remaining phases. As

the remaining phases are able to begin in any order, the first phase must be achieved before

phases two, three, and four can be developed. Phases two and three occur during the enrollment

at an HBCU. Phase four is initiated while enrolled in an HBCU but continues to develop after

graduating from an HBCU. The purpose of this section is to provide a detailed explanation of

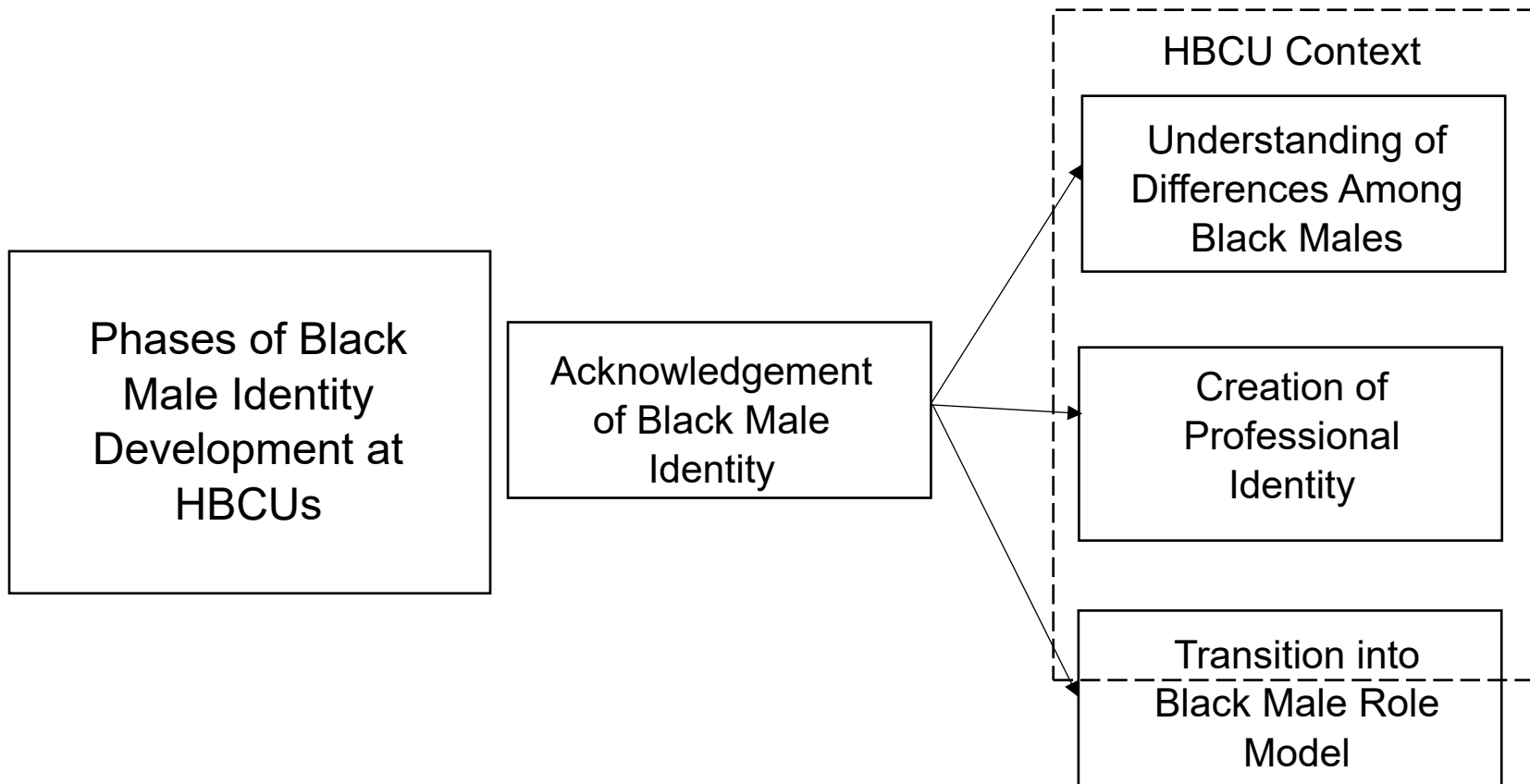each phase that are shown in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1. Theory of Black Male Identity Development Theory at HBCUs

Phase One: Acknowledgment of Black Male Identity

Black males who enroll in an HBCU do so with the understanding and recognition of their identity as a Black male. Acknowledgement of this identity occurs at a young age and is typically connected to an event that has transpired in the participant's life. For some Black males, this event may resemble a form of oppression by someone from the dominant culture. An example is being enrolled in a predominantly White school and becoming aware of the microaggressions that occur within the school. For other Black males, acknowledgement of their Black male identity is connected to someone they look up to who already identifies as a Black male.

During the acknowledgment phase, there is an appreciation of being a Black male, which manifests through pride in one's identity. This pride can manifest in different ways and is fostered further upon their enrollment into an HBCU. Learning who the Black male is and where they come from are specific ways the HBCU helps to nurture this pride that has formulated in the Black male.

Phase Two: Understanding All Black Males Are Not the Same

Recognizing the difference between Black males is a simple yet important phase. Depending on neighborhood demographics and parental occupations prior to enrolling into college, this phase could occur early in the Black male's life; however, this phase usually occurs during the first year of college. For Black males who have not been exposed to the diversity within the Black male community, their first year enrolled at the HBCU will come as a cultural shock that not all Black males are the same. The differences among Black males at an HBCU is important as it will allow Black males to explore who they are personally and begin to formulate their own identity.

Knowledge of self is critical to the Black male identity development on campus and is a process that occurs throughout all phases of identity development as Black males continuously seek to discover who they are and how they choose to present themselves. During this phase, specifically, the knowledge of self is increased as Black males begin to question who they thought they were prior to enrolling into an HBCU and whether or not this is their true identity. For some Black males they realize they have tried to fit in with different crowds and finally recognize who they connect with more. Others begin to dig deep into who they felt their identity was and expose the areas in which did not correlate with their true identity as a Black male. Seeing other Black males embrace their differences and going against the stereotypes provides a sense of comfort for Black males to accept their identity.

Phase Three: Creation of an Authentic Professional Identity

Professionalism is a quality that Black males who attended an HBCU possess. This quality is developed during enrollment at an HBCU. The first step in this phase is exposure to professional Black males in leadership. Black males at an HBCU are able to see and appreciate Black male leadership early in their college tenure. This exposure provides Black males insight of what it means to be a Black male professional and how a Black male professional should carry themselves. It is important to note Black males who attended an HBCU also gained value by connecting with Black females who were in leadership positions as well. Generally, the lessons learned when creating the professional identities were positively influenced by professionals who identified similar to them racially.

Creation of an authentic professional identity is done without regards to race for the Black males on an HBCU campus. At most HBCUs the student population is predominantly Black, so Black males are able to pursue leadership positions on campus without the worry or

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hesitation they will not receive the position due to their identity as a Black male. Seeing other Black male leaders also gives them the confidence to bring their true self into the leadership position.

Included in this phase is unplanned training that occurs in the classroom at an HBCU. Professors incorporate guidance of how to navigate society professionally into their curriculum. Being able to have these discussions openly helps to incorporate professionalism into the identity of the Black males. Completing this phase in college provides Black males the ability to limit their code switching in the professional arena and become confident with who they are and what they bring to the table after graduation.

Phase Four: Transition into a Black Male Role Model

Transition into a Black male role model is the final phase for the identity development of Black males who attend and graduate from an HBCU. During this phase, Black males take the lessons they have learned throughout their life thus far and begin to distribute them to the next generation of Black males. This phase begins as Black males are exposed to their own role models while enrolled at an HBCU. These role models do not have to identify as Black males but have the best interest of the individual in mind.

Other Consideration: Progression Through Cross's Black Identity Development Theory

In addition to progressing through the phases identified in the Black male identity theory presented in this study, Black males also continue with their progression through their Black identity development as presented by Cross (1991). Although Black males may enroll in an HBCU at an earlier stage of their Black identity, the experiences they have at an HBCU help them to leave at either the immersion/emersion or internalization/commitment stage and continue their process of transitioning into a Black male Role Model after graduation. This progression

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starts early in their enrollment at an HBCU and continues after they graduate from their institution.

Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on the findings of the 16 interviews conducted with eight participants. The major themes that were derived from the interviews included 1) acknowledgement of being a Black male; 2) understanding all Black males are not the same; 3) creation of an authentic professional identity; 4) progression through Cross's Black identity theory; and 5) transition to a Black male role model. These themes were developed by answering the research questions for this study during the data collection and analysis stage. Each theme was supported with evidence from participant interviews.

After analyzing these themes, a theory was developed for Black male identity development at HBCUs. This theory consists of four phases which are represented by the themes that were discovered during the data collection. These phases are: 1) Acknowledgement of Black male identity; 2) understanding all Black males are not the same; 3) creation of professional identity; and 4) transition into Black male role model. In addition to completing the phases in this theory, Black males also show a progression through their Black identity development while enrolled at an HBCU.

While there is limited research regarding Black male identity development, this chapter provides support that Black males do go through an identity formation process while they are enrolled at HBCUs. The next chapter will discuss the findings of this research, implications for the research, and future research recommendations.

Chapter 5 – Discussion of Findings, Implications for Practice, Recommendations for

Future Research

Creating a theory for Black male identity development for those who attend an

historically Black college or university (HBCU) was the purpose for this research study. Cross's

(1991) theory for Black identity development was used as a guiding theory for this study to

answer the following research questions:

1. How do the experiences at a Historically Black College and University influence the

identity development for Black males?

2. What external factors influence identity development for Black males who attend a

Historically Black College or University?

Participants in this study self-identified as Black or African American and as males who

completed their undergraduate coursework and graduated from an HBCU. Eight Black males

participated in semi-structured interviews and shared their experience of attending an historically

Black college or University and the influence their enrollment had on their identity development.

This study helps to fill the research gap of no current theories on Black male identity

development (Harper & Nichols, 2008; Jackson, 2012; Johnson & McGowan, 2017). Sections in

this chapter include a discussion of findings, implications for practice, and recommendations for

future research.

Discussion of Findings

Similar to other studies focusing on Black males (e.g., Strayhorn, 2013; Wood, 2014;

Wood & Williams, 2013), this study incorporated academic, social, and environmental factors

that impact Black males. Specifically, for this study, the focus is on what factors influence

identity development for Black males in order to develop a theory of Black male identity development for Black males who attended HBCUs.

Stories told by the participants in this study helped to develop a four-phase theory for Black male identity development for those who attended an HBCU. While the phases in this theory are achieved by all Black males in this study, it is not necessary a linear process, meaning phases can happen at any point for Black males. Phase one is the only exception to this as phase one must be achieved prior to exposure to the remaining phases. The four phases for identity development for Black males are: 1) acknowledgement of Black male identity; 2) understanding all Black males are not the same; 3) creation of an authentic professional identity; and 4) transition into a Black male role model. Phases one and four were determined to be influenced by external factors outside of an HBCU, while phases two and three were determined to be influenced by experiences Black males go through while enrolled at an HBCU. The remaining discussion in this section will focus on how the findings addressed the research questions.

Research Questions

How do the experiences at an historically Black college or university influence Black male identity development? Current research involving Black males focuses on the perseverance factors in higher education (e.g., see Kim & Hargrove, 2013; Strayhorn, 2013; Wood, 2014) and how Black males are able to attain academic success. Specific to HBCUs, the research has seen growth around the topic of Academic success for Black males (e.g. see, Palmer & Davis, 2012; Palmer & Gasman, 2008; Palmer & Maramba, 2012; Palmer & Young, 2009; Palmer, Davis, & Hilton, 2009; Palmer, Davis, & Maramba, 2010). Palmer et al. (2010) found that racial homogeneity was a positive factor for Black males' academic success. My research study also found racial homogeneity to be a positive factor, not for academic success, but for

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Black male identity development. Black males were provided the opportunity to be involved on their campus without having to consider race to be a challenge. This connection included applying for internships, running for campus student government positions, and connecting with school leadership.

Regarding the connection with leadership, this study found that Black males not only connected with leadership but saw their campus leaders as a form of role models. This finding supports the findings of Palmer and Maramba (2012) who found that authentic caring helped to promote Black male success on the campus of an HBCU. Palmer and Maramba also found the leadership on the HBCU campus promoted curriculum to incorporate real world experiences. These findings from Palmer and Maramba are also supported from my research as Black males stated they were taught life lessons by professors on campus.

Harper and Quaye (2007) discussed the impact of being involved in student organizations has on Black males in college. My study supports and furthers their findings by theorizing the process Black males go through to formulate their identities at HBCUs. Further, while Harper and Quaye only focus on Black males who were in their final stage of their Black identity development, my theory is not limited to any stage regarding Cross's (1991) Black identity development theory, but incorporates Black males who are in various stages of their Black identity development.

While the previous research focused on academic success, this study addresses the identity development for Black males on an HBCU campus. Black males are able to ignore the negative aspects ascribed to Blackness while they are able to construct their identity. In addition, Black males were also able to connect with campus leadership and learn more about life beyond academics in the classroom. Since Black males already acknowledge their identity to be a Black

male, their construction of their identity on an HBCU campus does not negatively influence their racial identity.

What external factors influence identity development for Black males who attend an historically Black college or university? Even with Black males attending an institution where the student body resembled them racially, they were still targets of racism when they were in the community at large. Black males experiences with racism in this study support the findings by Harper (2009) that Black males will experience both racism and success while they are enrolled on a college campus. The only difference for the participants of this study is that Black males did not have to worry about racism while they were on campus, just while they were in the community that included the White dominant population.

Palmer, Davis, and Maramba (2011) identified family as an external factor that influenced Black males' academic success. The connection to family is present in my study as well. For the participants in my study, family had an impact on participants identifying as a Black male at a young age. This identification was significant to the Black male identity development as Black males in this study recognized their identity was enhanced by their enrollment into an HBCU.

Another external factor that was identified through this study was the exposure to oppressive experiences at a young age that helped participants acknowledge their Black male identity. While this exposure was different for each participant, it was enough for the participant to know there is something different about them. Once they began to reflect on what was different, they were able to acknowledge their identity as a Black male.

Implications for Practice

Knowing there is a process a Black male goes through when they attend an HBCU, it is important environments at HBCUs promote and encourage the Black male identity development process. Allowing Black males opportunities to dig deeper to discover who they are may help Black males transition through the phases of this Black male identity theory. Faculty and staff should be encouraged to develop meaningful relationships with Black males on campus as this study has recognized the importance relationships are to the progression through phases for Black males.

Beyond fostering relationships on campus, HBCUs should encourage the Black males on their campus to take advantage of the opportunities that are there while racism does not play a significant factor. Encouraging Black males to participate in leadership roles and other organizations on campus allows the Black males to develop a professional identity that will provide confidence for these males when they are able to enter society. Reducing the need for code switching, Black males who have more confidence will be able to bring their authentic self to the table no matter who is in the room. This authenticity allows them to advocate for other Black males who have not had similar experiences as them and are still working on developing their professional identity.

HBCUs must make it a priority to continue to recruit Black males from various backgrounds. It is important for Black males to know and understand there is diversity among the Black male community. This diversity should be embraced as the media continues to encourage younger Black males to fulfill certain stereotypes. Diversity within the Black male population helps other Black males see that it is okay to present themselves in whatever way that

makes them feel comfortable. Being able to see other Black males accept their identity will help to minimize the desire for Black males to lower their expectations of who they are.

Not only should the Black male student population be targeted for recruitment, but the recruitment for Black professors should also be intentional. The Black males in this study identified the connection they have with their professors and how their professors were able to teach them more than academics in the classroom. These teachings had an influence on the development of Black males both personally and professionally. HBCUs should be intentional when hiring professors, both male and female, understanding the influence these professors will have on the Black male student population. In addition to recognizing what HBCUs can do to help their Black male students, this study has also been able to advance the current research regarding Black males. In the next section, I explain some of the ways my study was able to move the research regarding Black males forward.

Advancing the Research

Currently, the theory developed in this study is the only Black male identity development theory for Black males who attend an HBCU. This study starts the conversation about the development of an identity theory for Black males attending an HBCU. This study also continues the change in research regarding Black males with the use of positive language throughout the research study (e.g., Strayhorn, 2013; Wood, 2014; Wood & Williams, 2013) and avoiding the common research topics regarding Black males of persistence and perseverance in higher education (e.g., Strayhorn, 2013; Wood, 2014; Wood & Williams, 2013).

Adding to previous research, this study has also helped Black males to provide their own voice in their research similar to the studies presented by Boyd and Mitchell (2018), Harper, (2009, 2015), and Harper and Davis (2012). Allowing Black males to give their own account of

how their identity is developed will help to eliminate some of the misconceptions that can be developed in studies regarding Black males.

Research studies for Black males at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) focuses on social, academic, and environmental factors (Strayhorn, 2013; Wood, 2014; Wood & Williams, 2013). The research for Black males at HBCUs focuses on the academic success (e.g. see, Palmer & Davis, 2012; Palmer & Gasman, 2008; Palmer & Maramba, 2012; Palmer & Young, 2009; Palmer, Davis, & Hilton, 2009; Palmer, Davis, & Maramba, 2010). My study helps to bridge the gap between theses research foci by exploring the academic, social, and environmental factors that can influence Black male identity for Black males who have graduated from an HBCU. While this was not the original intent of the study, the findings highlight the need to continue to explore how Black male identity development influences Black male enrollment in college.

Recommendations for Future Research

The theory developed from this study could be used as a base theory for Black male identity development at HBCUs. This study looks specifically at Black males who attended an HBCU. The next step in expanding this theory might be to explore how Black males who attend a predominantly White institution (PWI) develop their identity as a Black male. Once the identity development for Black males is explored, it will be beneficial to compare the findings to this study and explore the similarities and differences that are present.

As Black males in college begin to be recognized and studied more in the academic realm, it is important to acknowledge identity is not limited to race and gender. Similar to the recommendations of Boyd and Mitchell (2018), identity intersections should also be explored to understand the impact this has on identity development. The more that can be researched

regarding Black males, the better chance institutions will be able to recognize their deficits and address how they can better serve this specific population holistically.

Most importantly, I recommend that future research to focus on the phases of identity development presented in this Black male identity theory. Being able to explain what each process looks like separate from the others will help to strengthen this theory and provide additional resources for institutions who seek to connect with their Black male student population. While the results of my study were able to identify and explain the phases Black males go through when formulating their identity, adding more depth will be a continuous process for the phases of this theory.

Conclusion

This study asked eight Black males to tell their stories, similar to the counternarrative approach presented in previous studies regarding Black males (e.g., Boyd & Mitchell, 2018; Harper, 2009, 2015; Harper & Davis, 2012). The outcome of this study was the development of a Black male identity theory for Black males who attend an HBCU. This theory included four phases: 1) acknowledgement of Black male identity; 2) understanding all Black males are not the same; 3) creation of an authentic professional identity; and 4) transition into a Black male role model. Progression and experience through each phase are different for each Black male but each phase serves as a critical component for the identity development for Black males at an HBCU.

The purpose of this study was to contribute to filling the research gap regarding identity development for Black males. The hope is this research will be used to encourage positive change in the higher education setting by promoting identity exploration for Black males at HBCUs. As Black males continue to enroll in higher education institutions, it is imperative to

expand the research beyond how to retain them. Black males in higher education exist and their identity development is no longer hidden. It is time to official change the narrative around Black males with the understanding that they are not all the same. Their identity in college matters and now that there is a theory to support their identity development in college, it is higher education professionals' job to make sure institutions support the identity development of Black males at HBCUs and beyond.

Notes

1. External factors were identified to be anything that happen outside of the institution that had an influence on the Black male identity development.

2. Males and Men were used interchangeably throughout chapter 2 in order to reflect the language used in previous literature. These were also used interchangeably throughout chapter 4 to reflect accurate participants' responses.

3. Black and African American were used interchangeably from this point forward to accommodate participants' racial identity preference.

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Appendix A

List of Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Name of Institution	Website	Type
Alabama A & M University	www.aamu.edu/	4-year, Public
Alabama State University	www.alasu.edu	4-year, Public
Albany State University	https://www.asurams.edu/	4-year, Public
Alcorn State University	www.alcorn.edu	4-year, Public
Allen University	www.allenuniversity.edu/	4-year, Private
American Baptist College	www.abcnash.edu	4-year, Private
Arkansas Baptist College	www.arkansasbaptist.edu	4-year, Private
Benedict College	www.benedict.edu	4-year, Private
Bennett College	www.bennett.edu/	4-year, Private
Bethune-Cookman University	www.cookman.edu	4-year, Private
Bishop State Community College	www.bishop.edu	2-year, Public
Bluefield State College	www.bluefieldstate.edu	4-year, Public
Bowie State University	www.bowiestate.edu	4-year, Public
Central State University	www.centralstate.edu	4-year, Public
Cheyney University of Pennsylvania	www.cheyney.edu	4-year, Public
Claflin University	www.claflin.edu	4-year, Private
Clark Atlanta University	www.cau.edu	4-year, Private
Clinton College	www.clintoncollege.edu	4-year, Private
Coahoma Community College	www.coahomacc.edu/	2-year, Public
Coppin State University	www.coppin.edu	4-year, Public
Delaware State University	www.desu.edu	4-year, Public
Denmark Technical College	www.denmarktech.edu	2-year, Public
Dillard University	www.dillard.edu	4-year, Private
Edward Waters College	www.ewc.edu	4-year, Private
Elizabeth City State University	www.ecsu.edu	4-year, Public
Fayetteville State University	https://www.uncfsu.edu	4-year, Public
Fisk University	www.fisk.edu	4-year, Private
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University	www.famu.edu	4-year, Public
Florida Memorial University	www.fmuniv.edu	4-year, Private
Fort Valley State University	www.fvsu.edu	4-year, Public
Gadsden State Community College	www.gadsdenstate.edu	2-year, Public
Grambling State University	www.gram.edu	4-year, Public
H Councill Trenholm State Community College	www.trenholmstate.edu	2-year, Public
Hampton University	www.hamptonu.edu	4-year, Private
Harris-Stowe State University	www.hssu.edu	4-year, Public
Howard University	www.howard.edu	4-year, Private
Huston-Tillotson University	www.htu.edu	4-year, Private
Interdenominational Theological Center	www.itc.edu	4-year, Private

Name of Institution	Website	Type
J. F. Drake State Community and Technical College	www.drakestate.edu	2-year, Public
Jackson State University	www.jsums.edu	4-year, Public
Jarvis Christian College	www.jarvis.edu	4-year, Private
Johnson C Smith University	www.jcsu.edu	4-year, Private
Kentucky State University	www.kysu.edu	4-year, Public
Lane College	www.lanecollege.edu	4-year, Private
Langston University	www.langston.edu	4-year, Public
Lawson State Community College	www.lawsonstate.edu	2-year, Public
Le Moyne-Owen College	www.loc.edu	4-year, Private
Lincoln University	https://www.lincolnu.edu/	4-year, Public
Lincoln University	www.lincoln.edu	4-year, Public
Livingstone College	www.livingstone.edu	4-year, Private
Meharry Medical College	www.mmc.edu	4-year, Private
Miles College	www.miles.edu	4-year, Private
Mississippi Valley State University	www.mvsu.edu	4-year, Public
Morehouse College	www.morehouse.edu	4-year, Private
Morehouse School of Medicine	www.msm.edu	4-year, Private
Morgan State University	www.morgan.edu	4-year, Public
Morris College	https://www.morris.edu	4-year, Private
Norfolk State University	www.nsu.edu	4-year, Public
North Carolina A & T State University	www.ncat.edu	4-year, Public
North Carolina Central University	www.nccu.edu	4-year, Public
Oakwood University	https://www2.oakwood.edu	4-year, Private
Paine College	www.paine.edu	4-year, Private
Paul Quinn College	www.pqc.edu	4-year, Private
Philander Smith College	https://www.philander.edu	4-year, Private
Prairie View A & M University	www.pvamu.edu	4-year, Public
Rust College	www.rustcollege.edu	4-year, Private
Saint Augustine's University	www.st-aug.edu	4-year, Private
Savannah State University	www.savannahstate.edu/	4-year, Public
Selma University	selmauniversity.edu	4-year, Private
Shaw University	www.shawu.edu	4-year, Private
Shelton State Community College	www.sheltonstate.edu	2-year, Public
Shorter College	www.shortercollege.edu	2-year, Private
Simmons College of Kentucky	www.simmonscollegeky.edu	4-year, Private
South Carolina State University	www.scsu.edu	4-year, Public
Southern University and A & M College	www.subr.edu	4-year, Public
Southern University at New Orleans	www.suno.edu	4-year, Public
Southern University at Shreveport	www.susla.edu	2-year, Public
Southwestern Christian College	www.swcc.edu	4-year, Private

Name of Institution	Website	Type
Spelman College	www.spelman.edu	4-year, Private
St Philip's College	www.alamo.edu/spc/	2-year, Public
Stillman College	https://stillman.edu	4-year, Private
Talladega College	www.talladega.edu	4-year, Private
Tennessee State University	www.tnstate.edu	4-year, Public
Texas College	www.texascollege.edu	4-year, Private
Texas Southern University	www.tsu.edu	4-year, Public
Tougaloo College	www.tougaloo.edu	4-year, Private
Tuskegee University	www.tuskegee.edu	4-year, Private
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff	www.uapb.edu	4-year, Public
University of Maryland Eastern Shore	www.umes.edu	4-year, Public
University of the District of Columbia	www.udc.edu	4-year, Public
University of the Virgin Islands	www.uvi.edu	4-year, Public
University of the Virgin Islands-Albert A. Sheen	www.uvi.edu	4-year, Public
Virginia State University	www.vsu.edu	4-year, Public
Virginia Union University	www.vuu.edu	4-year, Private
Virginia University of Lynchburg	www.vul.edu	4-year, Private
Voorhees College	www.voorhees.edu	4-year, Private
West Virginia State University	www.wvstateu.edu	4-year, Public
Wilberforce University	www.wilberforce.edu	4-year, Private
Wiley College	wileyc.edu	4-year, Private
Winston-Salem State University	www.wssu.edu	4-year, Public
Xavier University of Louisiana	https://www.xula.edu	4-year, Private

Appendix B

Sample Interview Email Request

Dear _____,

My name is Therron "T.Jai" Rogers and I am a student at Bellarmine University in Louisville, Kentucky in the PhD in Leadership in Higher Education program. I am reaching out because I am interested in exploring and documenting the experiences of Black males who attended HBCUs and how their attendance influenced their identity development to develop a theory of Black male identity. Would you be interested in participating in this research study?

Participation includes participating in an initial interview that will last approximately 60 minutes as well as one to two follow up interviews. Requirements for participating in this study include completion of all coursework and graduated from an HBCU; self-identify as Black or African American; and, self-identify as male. Please let me know if you are willing to participate, as well as your preferred availability during the month of _____.

If you know anyone else who may be interested in participating in this study, please feel free to forward this email along or have them complete this google form https://forms.gle/Cu8gfC5UCFnLQWQc7. Thanks very much and I look forward to hearing back from you. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Therron "T.Jai" Rogers, M.Ed.
Ph.D. Candidate, Leadership in Higher Education Program
Annsley Frazier Thornton School of Education
Bellarmine University

Email: Trogers03@bellarmine.edu
Phone: (502)321-5113

Appendix C

Informed Consent

Black Male Identity Development at Historically Black Colleges and Universities

DATE

Dear _____ :

You are being invited to engage in a face-to-face, phone, or video-conference interview about the influence of attending an historically Black College or University on Black male identity development. There are no risks or penalties for your participation in this research study. Your participation may or may not benefit you directly. The information learned in this study may be helpful to others. The data you provide will be used to develop a theory for Black male identity development. Your participation in this study will last for up to two months with an initial 60-minute interview and one to two follow up interviews and the completion of a participant information sheet. Your completed interview responses will be stored on the password personal computer. Individuals from the Department of Leadership and Higher Education at the Annsley Frazier Thornton School of Education and the Bellarmine University Institutional Review Board may inspect these records. In all other respects, however, the data will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Should the data be published, your identity will not be disclosed. Participants of this study will receive a $20 Amazon gift card upon receiving their informed consent. There will be no requirement of repayment if participation in the study is withdrawn.

Please remember that your participation in this study is voluntary. By completing the interview, you are voluntarily agreeing to participate. You are free to decline to answer any particular question that may make you feel uncomfortable or which may render you prosecutable under law.

You acknowledge that all your present questions have been answered in language you can understand. If you have any questions about the study, please contact Therron Rogers at 502-321-5113. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may call the Institutional Review Board (IRB) office at 502-272-8032. You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject, in confidence, with a member of the committee. This is an independent committee composed of members of the University community and lay members of the community not connected with this institution. The IRB has reviewed this study.

Sincerely,

Therron Rogers
PhD Candidate, Leadership in Higher Education
Bellarmine University

Appendix D

Interview Questions

1. What does it mean to be a Black male to you?
2. When did you first begin to identify as a Black male?
   a. Was there a significant event that influenced your identity at that time? If so, explain.
3. What factors influenced your college selection?
4. How was your experience of being a Black male at an HBCU?
5. What experiences while attending an HBCU, if any, influenced your identity development?
6. How did you fit in socially as a Black male on campus at an HBCU?
7. How did you fit in academically as a Black male on campus at an HBCU?
8. What struggles, if any, did you have on campus that you would say were influenced by your identity of being a Black male?
9. What privileges, if any, did you have on campus that you would say were influenced by your identity of being a Black male?
10. Would you say your experience of being a Black male at an HBCU is comparative to your experience of being a Black male outside of an HBCU? Why or why not?
11. What moment while being enrolled at an HBCU had the greatest impact on your identity development at that time?
12. Who in college had the greatest impact on your college development at that time?
13. Are there any other specific experiences you would like to share in regards to your personal identity development?
14. How has attending an HBCU impacted your socialization beyond the classroom?
15. Please explain who outside of College has had the greatest impact on your identity as a Black male?
16. Given the stages of Cross's Black identity development, which stage would you say you were in prior to starting college? Which stage would you say you were in upon graduation?

Appendix E

Participant Information Sheet

Year Graduated	
College Major	
Grade Point Average at graduation	
Years to complete degree	
Who lived in your household growing up?	
Were you a first-generation college graduate?	
Household income growing up (Circle one)	**19,999 or less** **20,000 to 39,999** **40,000 to 59,999** **60,000 to 79,999** **80,000 to 99,999** **100,000 or above**
Current occupation	
Did you attend graduate school? **If yes, was it an HBCU?**	
Did you complete an African American history course or a course similar?	
Did you live on-campus? If yes, how many years?	
Institution Size (circle one)	**1,000 or less undergraduates** **1,001 to 2,999 undergraduates** **3,000 to 9,999 undergraduates** **10,000 or more undergraduates**
Did you have a Black male role model outside of your immediate family?	

Appendix F

Second Round Interview Questions

1. How have you been able to effectively manage code switching in the professional arena?
2. Describe what it means to be proud to be a Black male?
    a. How was this influenced by you attending an HBCU?
3. When did you become proud to be a Black male?
4. What helped you when attending an HBCU that helped you to become a Black male professional?
5. What did you learn at an HBCU that helped you to separate your personal and professional identities?
6. As a Black male role model, what qualities do you possess that will help to train the next generation of Black males
    a. What lessons do you feel need to be taught?
    b. Were you taught these lessons? If so, when?
7. How does a professional Black male carry them self?

Appendix G

Cross's Stages of Identity Development

Pre-Encounter	Believe the value of the White culture and do not question those beliefs. Do not believe or unaware of the significance of race and racial identity.
Encounter	An event has occurred allowing you to acknowledge racism and the impact it has on your life. You begin to question what you have heard from the White culture and how your life has been impacted from your previous beliefs.
Immersion/Emersion	You have embraced your Blackness and begin to surround yourself with symbols that emphasis your racial identity. You have distanced yourself from what would be considered Whiteness. You begin to explore your own Black identity through personal research which causes you to harbor anger towards the White culture.
Internalization/Commitment	You have become secure in your Black identity. You no longer have anger towards the White culture and are able to develop relationships with Whites that are meaningful with respect to your own identity. You are committed to your culture and develop a plan of action to help Blacks advance.

Cross, W. E., Jr. (1991). *Shades of Black: Diversity in African American identity*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.